



Slips, Trips & Falls Awareness

Safety and Environmental Management System

SEMS 5-8

Slips, trips and falls are one of the most frequent causes of accidents, both on and off the job. Each year, in the United States, more than 300,000 people suffer disabling injuries from falls. Slips, trips and falls can be fatal as well; they rank second only to automobile accidents, causing nearly 12,000 deaths a year. To avoid getting hurt from falls, avoid rushing and remember the following:

Slip: a loss of balance that occurs when there is too little friction between our feet and the surface we are walking on.

Trip: occurs when the foot hits an object, balance is thrown off, causing fall.

Watch where you walk:

Be aware of where you are walking. Look down for flooring defects, spilled liquids and changing surface levels. Always make sure the path is clear of obstructions. Make sure the area is well lit or use a flashlight if lighting is poor. PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR STEP! Learning to recognize hazards and to avoid potential hazards saves time, money and injury. Resist the temptation to take short-cuts because short-cuts are usually comprised of objects or routes not designed for foot traffic and often consist of unstable, shaky or slippery surfaces.

Practice walking safely:

If you cannot avoid walking on a slippery or wet surface, practice walking safely across them. Do not try to run, jump or slide across these slick surfaces. Instead take slow, short steps with your toes pointed slightly outward. For additional balance keep your hands at your side (unless there is a handrail), not in your pockets, to support you if you fall. Remember that a freshly polished floor can also be very slick even though it does not appear hazardous.

Clean Up Spills:

Slippery surfaces often do not appear dangerous until you happen to step on them, and then it is too late! Clean up grease, water and other spills as you notice them.

Wear proper footwear:

Make sure your shoes are in good shape and correct for the job. Discard worn-out shoes with smooth soles or other defects. If conditions are wet and slippery, wear non-slip shoes or boots. Steel-toed shoes are required on all SONOCO job locations.

Check floor openings:

Avoid unguarded floor openings. All unguarded floor openings should be reported to your supervisor immediately. When covers are placed over floor openings, avoid walking on the cover unless it is absolutely secure and will not move or collapse.



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Stair Safety:

Stairways that are too steep or are not steep enough can create the potential for slips, trips and falls. Because it is very easy to lose your footing while climbing stairs, walk up and down very slowly, and use the handrail. Be cautious of worn or broken steps, and of insufficient lighting that may make it difficult to see properly. Never run up or down stairs and avoid skipping steps. If you have to carry a load while climbing stairs, carry the load so it doesn't block your vision and you can see your feet. Keep one hand free to hold the handrail. If you cannot do these things, divide the load up, or get help.

Do not get in a hurry:

Slips, trips, and falls often occur while people are in a hurry. They often take short cuts, and do not pay attention to what they are doing. We have all tried to *jump over an obstacle*, instead of walking *the long way around* to our destination. These types of acts are unsafe. Learn to slow down and walk around or move obstacles (if possible), thus avoiding dangerous short cuts.

Maintain Proper Lighting:

Inadequate lighting can camouflage what is in your way, so report these conditions to your supervisor and have the light fixtures replaced. When you enter a dark room, turn on the light first and allow your eyes to adjust, even for only a moment. Keep walkways clear of obstructions in areas that have poor lighting.

Ladder/Stool Inspections:

Check rungs to ensure they are in good condition with no cracks or broken parts. If the ladder is equipped with a spreader that locks the ladder frame into position, make sure it is secure before climbing. Check to see if the ladder is the correct height for the job. Never lean over from a ladder.

How you fall often determines your specific injury:

From the time you lose a secure grip, footing or balance, until impact, several factors influence what part of the body will be injured and how severe the damage will be.

Distance of the fall – *momentum and velocity affect the impact on your body.*

The angle of the body at impact – *we're not like cats landing on all fours.*

The obstacles the body strikes – *if you fall on railings, steps, or materials?*

The surface eventually landed on – *will it be a pile of sand or concrete*