

University Health Network Policy & Procedure Manual UHN Safety Services: Slips, Trips & Falls

Policy

University Health Network (UHN) is committed to reducing or eliminating the risk of injury from [slips](#), [trips](#) and [falls](#) in the workplace.

All workplace hazards with the potential to result in a slip, trip or fall will be reported to management for immediate corrective action. Where the risk to slips, trips or falls cannot be eliminated immediately, steps to reduce the risk must be taken.

All UHN workers must report a slip, trip or fall hazard to their managers/supervisors in accordance with the Occupational Health & Safety Act of Ontario.

This policy applies to all UHN staff.

Responsibilities

Managers/Supervisors

- Ensure that work areas under their authority are free of all slip, trip and fall hazards. (Refer to [Appendix: Examples of Slip, Trip & Fall Causes](#), [Appendix: Slip, Trip & Fall Controls](#), and [Appendix: Hierarchy of Slip, Trip & Fall Controls](#).)
- When a hazard cannot be corrected immediately, clearly identify it by signage and notify staff, where applicable, until the hazard can be corrected.
- Report such hazards to the individuals that can correct them as soon as reasonably possible.

UHN Safety Services

- Analyze and report trends in injury and/or incident rates related to slip, trip and fall hazards.
- Assist departments in evaluating areas where slip, trip and fall hazards are prevalent and provide suggestions to help control the hazards.
- Make available awareness/training for employees who work in areas where slip, trip and fall hazards are prevalent.

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Facilities & Environmental Services

- Correct maintenance related slip, trip and fall hazards in a timely manner and put interim measures in place, as required.
- When notified, clean up spills quickly and post signs until the floor surface is dry.

Joint Health & Safety Committee

- May identify slip, trip and fall hazards through the course of its workplace inspections.
- May make recommendations to management for the correction of slip, trip and fall hazards.
- May review and consult on the program.

Employees

- Report any hazards or potential hazards immediately to their immediate supervisors.
- Correct any slip, trip or fall hazard, where possible.
- Wear footwear appropriate in the circumstances. (See [Safety Footwear](#) policy 6.40.002.)
- Work in compliance with the Occupational Health & Safety Act, and its regulations.

Contractors

- Ensure that any work performed on UHN property does not create a slip, trip and fall hazard outside of any project space under their authority.
- When a hazard cannot be corrected immediately, clearly identify it by signage and notify staff, where applicable, until the hazard can be corrected.

Slip, Trip & Fall Prevention

Departments must ensure that the walking surfaces in their areas are kept free of slip, trip or fall hazards. (Refer to [Appendix: Examples of Slip, Trip & Fall Causes](#), [Appendix: Slip, Trip & Fall Controls](#), and [Appendix: Hierarchy of Slip, Trip & Fall Controls](#).)

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If departmental staff and resources cannot correct a slip, trip or fall hazard, Environmental Services and/or Facilities must be notified to provide assistance.

Environmental Services staff must place signage when the floor they are working on is wet. "**Wet Floor**" signs are preferred, and the entire work area should be visible from either end. These signs must be taken down when the work is complete, so that pedestrians will understand that the signs notify them of actual hazards.

Non-skid mats should be placed at entrances during inclement weather.

When an area is being renovated, non-slip floors and stairs will be selected in accordance with the [UHN Construction & Design Guidelines](#).

Snow and ice will be cleared as soon as possible, but in the winter, all staff should be aware and pay attention to the surfaces they are walking on.

Note: Studies indicate that knowing a surface may be slippery alters our gait and reduces the likelihood of slipping and/or falling.

Supervisors must ensure that their staff are aware of the different causes of slips, trips and falls and the appropriate corrective actions such as those outlined in the appendices:

- [Examples of Slip, Trip & Fall Causes](#)
- [Slip, Trip & Fall Controls](#)
- [Hierarchy of Slip, Trip & Fall Controls](#)

Near misses and injuries arising from slips, trips and falls hazards must be reported to the supervisor and Occupational Health & Safety in accordance with the [UHN Safety Event Portal](#).

Definitions

Fall: Occurs for many reasons and may result from a slip, trip, loss of balance or grip, or a health condition.

Slip: Occurs when the foot and floor surface cannot make effective contact/grip; usually caused when something has been spilt or when the shoe sole and floor are unsuited.

Trip: Occurs when an obstruction prevents normal movement of the foot, resulting in a loss of balance; usually caused by objects on the floor or due to uneven surfaces.

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Appendix

Examples of Slip, Trip & Fall Causes

Slip and trip accidents may have different causes, but often have the same result. By looking at the contributing factors separately, it is possible to work out more accurately the cause of a slip or trip accident.

Slip Hazards

- spills and splashes of liquids and solids (i.e. dry substance)
- wet floors/slippy surface (following cleaning)
- unsuitable footwear
- rain, sleet and snow, ice
- change from a wet to a dry surface (footwear still wet)
- unsuitable floor surface/covering
- dusty floors
- sloping surfaces

Trip Hazards

- loose flooring
- uneven indoor or outdoor surfaces
- frayed, torn or crumpled carpets
- mats unsecured, overlapping or curled
- holes/cracks
- changes in surface level – ramps, steps and stairs
- cables/electrical cords across walking areas or dangling at workstations
- obstructions/debris/garbage on the floor
- cabinet drawers open
- bumps, ridges and protruding nails, etc.
- low wall and floor fixtures – door catches, door stops, electrical and telephone socket outlets
- untidy work area
- loose rugs
- use of handheld devices while walking

Fall Hazards

- lack of training in moving and handling patients
- over reaching
- climbing on furniture
- unsteady step stool/ladder
- damaged step stool/ladder surface
- rushing down steps/stairs, ladders and faulty equipment

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- use of hand-held devices while walking/walking down steps/stairs
- uneven steps
- unguarded walkways or platforms
- missing handrails for stairs with more than 4 steps
- handrails unsecured

Factors which Increase Risk

- inattention
- hazard assessments not carried out
- poor or unsuitable lighting
- wrong cleaning regimen/materials
- moving goods/carrying/pushing or pulling a load
- rushing
- distractions/fatigue
- carrying objects that obscure vision
- insufficient or poorly visible signs

Slip, Trip & Fall Controls

Hazard	Prevention/Controls
No area inspections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas should be inspected by staff for slip, trip and fall hazards at regular intervals • Incidents must be reported and control measures put in place
Spillage of wet and dry substances, body fluids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean up spills immediately following appropriate procedure • If a liquid is greasy, ensure that a suitable cleaning agent is used • After cleaning, the floor may be wet for some time; therefore, use appropriate signs to tell people the floors are still wet and arrange alternative bypass routes • Refer to Clean-up of Blood or Body Fluid Spills policy 4.20.011
Miscellaneous rubbish, e.g. plastic bags	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep areas clear, remove rubbish and do not allow build up
Slippery surfaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the cause and treat accordingly, with appropriate cleaning method, regimen/material
Poor lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve lighting levels and placement of light fittings to ensure more even lighting of all floor areas
Changes of level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve lighting • Make tread edges (nosing) more distinctive
Slopes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve visibility • Provide handrails • Use floor markings or change colour of covering on slope
Unsuitable footwear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that patients and workers choose suitable footwear, particularly with the correct type of sole (material suited to common walking surfaces,

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Hazard	Prevention/Controls
	close-cut pattern with abundant edges)
Stray cords	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep cords out of path of employees • Secure or tape down as required
Stairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not run up and down stairs • Use handrail when descending • Do not use handheld devices while walking down stairs/steps

Hierarchy of Slip, Trip & Fall Controls

Hierarchy of Controls	Examples
Eliminate the hazard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove slip and trip hazards at the design stage such as eliminating changes in floor levels; installing more power outlets through the floor and ceiling to avoid trailing cords
Substitution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resurface floors
Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit access to high-risk areas
Minimize risk by redesign (engineering means)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply floor treatments to increase slip resistance • Improve lighting • Stop leaks from equipment or pipes • Provide adequate drainage to prevent pooling of contaminants • Clearly mark edges of steps and any changes in floor height
Administrative controls	<p>Implement good housekeeping practices such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear access ways • prompt spills management • use of signage or barricades for wet or slippery areas • training and supervision
Personal protective equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear suitable footwear (including weather appropriate footwear)

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