Workplan: Walking and Working Surfaces



Floors, stairs, ladders, scaffolds, and areas above equipment and machines workers must access are considered walking and working surfaces. These surfaces are notorious for creating and sometimes concealing slip, trip, and fall (STF) hazards.

Use this Workplan to help you recognize, address and prevent slip, trip, and fall hazards and related injuries.

3 Step Workplan for Walking and Working Surfaces

Step 1: Hazard Identification

The following are some of the more common walking and working surface conditions that contribute to slips, trips, and falls.

- Moving or sliding of rugs, mats or ladders.
- Cables, cords and wires, air hoses, conduit and pipes, pallets, and other items left in aisles and walkways.
- Collapse or breakage of floorboards, ladders, scaffolding, and other support structures.
- Trip hazards in floors – holes, slopes, loose flooring, objects sticking up, uncovered grates and drains.
- Sudden changes in elevation or floor surfaces (i.e. carpet to tile).
- Slippery floors and surfaces caused by cleaning products (i.e. waxes and polishes); water, ice, or snow; spills, sprays and mists from machines and processes.
- Stairs with irregular, missing, or worn treads; missing handrails; clutter; bad lighting and glare.
- Ladders and scaffolds used unsafely and/or not maintained.
- Missing or damaged guardrails.
- Missing, damaged, or weak covers on floor and wall holes and openings.

Step 2: Implement Controls

Check with Federal, State, and Provincial requirements for specifics, but listed below are several ways to control STF hazards and prevent STF related injuries.

Housekeeping

    - Keep passageways, storerooms and service rooms clean, orderly and sanitary.
    - Provide adequate storage areas and facilities.
    - Keep floors as clean and as dry as possible.
    - Keep floors and passageways free of slip, trip, and fall hazards like protruding nails, holes and loose boards.
    - Install drip pans to contain overspray, waste, and leaks.
- **Aisles and Passageways**
    - Keep aisles and passageways clean, in good repair and unobstructed.
    - Maintain required safe clearance distances for aisles, electrical cabinets, and other areas.
    - Anywhere moving equipment is used (i.e. forklifts) there must be enough room for equipment to safely maneuver.
    - Keep aisles and passageways clearly and permanently marked.
- **Loading Docks**
    - Mark edges of dock with yellow warning lines.
    - Use gates, chains, or other barricades to prevent falls when doors are open, and no truck is present.
    - Don’t allow workers to jump from the dock – enforce use of stairs and ramps.
- **Outside Areas**
    - Keep parking areas free of potholes, ice, snow, and other hazards.
    - Keep entrances and paths to entrances clear of ice and snow.
- **Inside Areas**
    - Keep cables and cords out of the way or safely covered.
    - Make warning signs and spill clean up supplies available.
    - Install non-slip mats and rugs.
    - Be mindful of floor cleaning products and substitute products when needed.
- **Stairways**
    - Keep stairwells well-lit and free of clutter.
    - Repair damage to stairs and railings promptly.
    - Check safety regulations and building codes for specific requirements for guardrail and stairway design specifics.
- **Ladders**
    - Know and enforce requirements governing the design, construction and use of different kinds of ladders, including:
        - Portable wood ladders
        - Portable metal ladders
        - Fixed ladders
- **Scaffolding**
    - Scaffolds are subject to design, construction and use requirements.
    - Ensure scaffolding is designed, erected, and dismantled by qualified and reputable persons/companies.
- **Holes, Openings, Pits, Tanks, etc.**
    - Install covers and guardrails to protect workers and other personnel from hazards of open pits, tanks, vats, ditches, etc.
    - Securely cover and mark covers of floor and wall holes and openings.
    - Provide fall protection when there is a risk of falling to a lower level.
    - Check safety regulations for specifics on requirements.

- **PPE**
    - Establish standards for what footwear is appropriate at your office, site, warehouse, shop, or other work location.
- **Other**
    - Implement and enforce regular inspections to identify slip, trip, and fall hazards.
    - Institute a system of reporting and repairing or addressing requests for repair; concerns related to areas, processes, and other factors related to slips, trips, and falls.

Step 3: Training

- Train supervisors and employees on:
    - Slip, trip, and fall hazards at their location.
    - Proper way to cover and label floor and wall holes and openings.
    - Spill response
        - How to report spills – which spills are safe to clean up and when to call for help.
        - Where spill supplies and warning signs are located.
        - When to use and how to use.
    - Fall arrest and fall restraint systems:
        - When to use
        - How to use
        - Care and maintenance
    - PPE or footwear requirements.
    - Reporting and follow up process.
    - Other safe work practices.

Bottom Line

Hazardous walking and working surfaces account for hundreds of thousands of injuries and hundreds of deaths every year.

This translates into billions of dollars spent on work comp, lost-time injuries, and days away from work.

Set yourself, your employees, and your organization up for success by doing your part to keep these surfaces safe.