



# Walking and Working Surfaces

## Lesson 2 Study Guide



### LESSON PURPOSE:

The purpose of this lesson is to recognize walking and working surface hazards can lead to serious injuries, and provide information to protect yourself from the risks.



### LESSON OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Identify the common hazards associated with walking and working surfaces
- Describe the major types of walking and working surface hazards
- List methods that can be used to protect against walking and working surfaces hazards
- Explain employer requirements regarding walking and working surfaces







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### Defining Walking and Working Surface Hazards

According to OSHA, slips, trips, and falls constitute most of general industry accidents.

A walking and working surface can be defined as any surface on which an employee walks or works to perform their job duties.



### REMEMBER

Hazard prevention is OSHA's primary goal!

Below are some examples of ways to prevent walking and working surface-related injuries in the workplace:

- Keep surfaces clean and clear of obstructions
- Clean spills quickly and warn others of wet surfaces
- Report lights that have burned out or

stopped working

- Remain alert for changes in elevation
- Use appropriate protective footwear and equipment

### Human Factors

In addition to risks presented by the workplace itself, human factors also contribute to slips, trips, and falls.

Awareness of these human factors can prevent workplace injuries:

- Age and its effect on balance
- Fatigue
- Inattentiveness (e.g. daydreaming, using a cell phone)
- Poor/obstructed eyesight
- Inappropriate footwear

**Slips, trips, and falls can lead to injuries, disabilities, and even death. Use caution and follow appropriate practices in the workplace.**



## Types of Walking and Working Surface Hazards

Accidents and injuries caused by walking and working hazards are preventable if the proper precautions are taken.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has defined the top 10 slip, trip, and fall hazards:

- 1 CONTAMINANTS ON THE WALKING SURFACE**  
Common examples include water, grease, cleaning products, spilled items, sand, flour, and highly polished surfaces (e.g. marble, ceramic tile)
- 2 INDOOR SURFACE IRREGULARITIES**  
Entrances, hallways, and drains are common indoor surfaces that are susceptible to damage, warping, buckling, and unevenness
- 3 OUTDOOR SURFACE IRREGULARITIES**  
Entrances, lawns, parking spaces, walkways, and drains are examples of outdoor surfaces that can become hazardous when they are poorly maintained, uneven, or contain protruding structures or holes
- 4 SNOW AND ICE**  
Injuries occur in locations where snow and ice can accumulate – entrances, walkways, and stairs are common examples of these locations
- 5 INADEQUATE LIGHTING**  
Vision impairment makes it difficult to see potential hazards  
Often found in parking structures, storage rooms, hallways, stairwells, and walkways
- 6 STAIRS AND RAILS**  
Uneven stairs and handrails of improper height and position can cause injuries
- 7 LADDERS AND STEPSTOOLS**
- 8 TRIPPING HAZARDS**  
Common examples include clutter and cords
- 9 IMPROPER USE OF FLOOR MATS**
- 10 DRAINS AND PIPES**  
Improper pipe alignment and clogged drains can lead to surface spills



### Protecting Yourself from Surface Hazards

Protection is essential to the safety of everyone in the workplace.



Employees should always be prepared to protect themselves from the hazards associated with walking and working surfaces.

These are preparation techniques to decrease the risk of workplace injuries and accidents:

- Follow proper cleaning procedures for floors and always wear appropriate slip-resistant footwear when working with contaminants.
- For surface irregularities, remain as attentive as possible by surveying your surroundings and take extra precautions if vision is limited.
- Always be prepared in cold and wet conditions by wearing slip-resistant footwear, moving with caution, and using floor mats at entrances.
- Do not conduct work tasks if you cannot see clearly and inform your employer of poorly lit areas.
- When using stairs and rails, check for visual clues, surface contaminants, evenness, and available light.
- To protect yourself when using ladders and stepstools, always wear appropriate footwear and ensure they are on level ground. Always



*Make sure you are trained in the proper usage of ladders to protect yourself.*

maintain three points of contact with the ladder while climbing. Never use the top of a regular stepladder as a step, and never use metal ladders near electrical equipment.

- To avoid tripping hazards, keep walkways clear by putting items away and keeping cords tangle-free and off the floor.
- Inform your employer and tend to the spill hazard if you notice any clogs or pipe spills.
- Protect yourself from floor and wall openings, and avoid weakened or damaged scaffolding.






### Employer Responsibilities

Employers are responsible for maintaining the safety of walking and working surfaces.

Employers should inspect and perform preventative maintenance on walking and working surfaces on a regular basis to avoid serious injuries, lost work days, reduced productivity, and worker compensation claims.

Here are examples of standard employer requirements regarding walking and working surfaces:

- A written housekeeping program ensures that workers are prepared for contaminant spills and tripping hazards. 
- For surface irregularities both indoors and out, faulty floor coverings, cracks, and holes should be repaired, and changes in elevation should be marked.
- Employers should have a snow and ice removal plan in place. When winter weather is imminent, employers should provide freezing weather monitors, extra slip-resistant mats, and information about icy and/or snowy conditions.
- Adequate lighting should be provided, especially in poorly lit areas. All bulbs should have an appropriate brightness.
- Employers should ensure that stairs have visual cues to provide a warning in change of elevation, have slip-resistant tread, are kept clean, and have adequate lighting.
- Handrails should be considered at locations with less than 4 steps. They



*Make sure your workplace is compliant with OSHA standards.*

should also be within consistent height range, and installed on both sides, as appropriate.

- Employers should provide training in the proper use of ladders and step-stools. Training should cover the importance of appropriate footwear and equipment, using level surfaces, and keeping appropriate contact.
- Mats should be provided as needed to protect employees. Mats should be of adequate size and condition and should be secured to prevent movement.
- Employers should ensure that drains are regularly unclogged and that pipes are properly aligned to avoid spill hazards.
- Floor openings, wall openings, and scaffolding should be properly guarded.

