

Slips, Trips and Falls Policy

Reviewed Date		Number	<i>HS0104</i>
Revised Date		Approved Date	<i>January 12, 2005</i>

Introduction

N/A

Purpose

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit and employees both share in the responsibility to prevent injury while on the job. The purpose of this policy is to educate staff on this topic in order to reduce and prevent slips, trips and falls in the workplace.

Legislative Authority

N/A

Policy Definitions and Interpretation

Slips, trips and falls are among the most frequent types of accidents, second only to motor vehicle accidents as a cause of death¹. The average cost per claim for injuries resulting from falls is higher than for any other type of injury². Although most slips, trips and falls experienced by health unit staff do not result in injury, the potential is there for serious injury or death. The most common injury is a strain or sprain, which can result in lost productivity and pain and discomfort for the injured person. Many health unit staff work outside of the offices and need to be vigilant regarding hazards they encounter in the course of doing their work. Workers and employers both share in the responsibility to prevent injury while on the job.

Types of fall:

Slips and trips happen on a level surface and can result in a fall. Falls also occur from a height although the most common incident is a fall on a level surface.

Slips usually occur on a slippery surface and can be compounded by wearing the wrong footwear.

Trips can occur when the walking surface is irregular or obstacles are in the walkway.

Policy

N/A

Procedures

Prevention of Falls Due to Slips and Trips

1. Most falls occur in parking lots in winter when exiting a vehicle and entering an office building. The most likely time for a slip to occur is when transferring weight to the first foot outside the car.
2. Health unit employees should wear footwear with **slip-resistant soles** and exercise caution when walking on slippery surfaces. Chevron or cleat-designed soles are the best design for slippery surfaces because of the suction or squeezing action they provide³. Shoes with minimal heel to surface contact, such as high heels, and shoes with leather or other smooth surfaces lead to falls and should be avoided.
3. All slips, trips and falls should be reported:
 - a. if no injury, using the Near Miss Form HS0104 (F2)
 - b. if injury occurred, using the Employee Incident Report Form HS0104 (F3A)
 - c. anyone noticing a area of concern for falls should complete the Potential or Existing Unsafe Workplace Condition HS0104(F1)
4. In the event of an **Employee Incident Report** being made due to a fall, or a **Near Miss** or **Potential or Existing Unsafe Workplace Condition** being reported, the Manager should consider and discuss footwear worn at the time of the incident and its possible contribution to the incident or near miss, as well as investigate other factors which may have an impact on the fall (or potential fall) including:
 - a. slippery surfaces
 - b. spills on floors or stairs
 - c. obstacles
 - d. poor lighting
 - e. cables/cords in a traffic area, or
 - f. being inattentive to walkway surface.
5. Stairs:

Employees should be reminded to have a hand free to hold onto stair handrails when using stairs. Carrying materials which obstruct view and do not leave a hand free for the handrail can put people at risk for serious injury and should be discouraged. Long hems on clothing can also contribute to a fall on stairs and should be avoided.
6. Maintenance is critical to making the workplace safe from falls. Liability for injuries to members of the public also needs to be taken into consideration.

Exterior Factors:

Snowplowing, sanding and salting of health unit office parking lots should be done prior to employees arriving for work. If weather conditions change during the course of the day, and the outside surfaces become slippery, staff are encouraged to sprinkle de-icer on walkways and contact the appropriate administrative staff regarding conditions in the

parking lot.

Interior Factors:

Water tracked into the building or spilled liquids need to be cleaned up and a notice posted for ongoing wet areas (“caution –wet surface”) if required. Rug edges worn and lifting, loose tiles and irregular floor surfaces can contribute to a fall and should be replaced or repaired. Stairs with a slippery surface or worn treads, no handrail or poor lighting should be repaired to avoid falls from a height which is the most serious type of fall.

Related Policies

1. University of Florida, Circular 869, October 1992
2. Industrial Accident Prevention Association, Walking and Working Surfaces, August 2002
3. University of Florida, Circular 869, October 1992

Related Forms

HS0104 (F2) Near Miss
HS0104 (F3A) Employee Incident Report
HS0104(F1) Potential or Existing Unsafe Workplace Condition

Final Approval Signature: _____

Review/Revision History:

September 2010 Policy re-numbered, previous number B2.130