



Housekeeping

Practices, Facility Inspections and Preventive Maintenance Programs

Slip, trip and fall accidents are a leading cause of injury across many industry segments including education, health care, manufacturing, trucking and general office environments. Good housekeeping practices, routine facility inspections and preventive maintenance programs are all effective ways of preventing these injuries and lowering the cost of workers' compensation insurance.

Key Players

School, janitorial and maintenance staff play a key role in keeping campus parking lots, sidewalks and interior walking surfaces clean and well-maintained. Management plays an important role in this process by meeting with these employees and reviewing current work practices and procedures. Discuss where potential slip and fall exposures are present on your campus and how facility inspections, preventive maintenance programs and housekeeping practices can be fine tuned to focus on winter-related exposures.

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Outdoors

Inspections and snow removal procedures should be in place to identify and make necessary repairs to prevent slip and fall injuries.

- Parking lots, sidewalks and outdoor steps need to have any snow accumulation removed in a timely manner and have salt or other surface treatments applied to melt icy spots.
- Extreme winter environmental factors can be harsh on blacktop and concrete surfaces, so ongoing inspections need to be performed to identify potholes and cracks that may have formed.
- Temporary barricades and safety cones should be on hand to mark these areas until appropriate repairs can be made.
- Special cold patch products are available to fill potholes and large cracks in outdoor parking lots and sidewalks even during the extreme winter months.
- Preventive maintenance programs and safety inspection checklists should include areas with a known history of slip and fall incidents.
- Lighting systems covering the parking lot and sidewalks should be checked early in the morning or evening to verify they are working properly and to identify any electrical ballast systems that need repair. Deficient lighting makes it more difficult for employees to choose a safe path of travel and see patches of snow and ice.
- Audits should include a close examination of curbs, which are often damaged by snow removal equipment.
- Entrance steps and handrails need to be inspected for damage.
- Slabs of sidewalk concrete can be lifted by trapped water that freezes and creates a lip between the sections. These sections may need to be ground down with specialized machinery to create a smooth transition area.
- Additional mud-jacking may be necessary during the early spring season.
- Drain pipes, grate covers and catch basins may become clogged with debris or ice dams, causing water from melting snow and ice to back up onto walking surfaces and refreeze.



Housekeeping and Preventive Maintenance Software Application Resources:

- EscSoftwareTools.com
- SMGlobal.com
- eMaint.com

Inside

Once inside a building, there is a sense of relief from the biting winter wind and a false sense of security that the potential for slip and falls has passed. Interior walking surfaces, such as entrances, foyers, reception areas, hallways, and stairwells, are all areas where serious slip and fall injuries occur, and special attention should be paid to housekeeping in these areas.

- The occurrence of these injuries mainly takes place during the winter when employees and visitors inadvertently track snow, ice and water throughout hallways, stairwells, break rooms, restrooms and other interior areas.
- These walking surfaces can quickly accumulate snow, ice, water and excess salting materials, which need to be cleaned in a prompt manner to remove hazards.
- Heavy foot traffic causes entrance mats to roll up and become a major trip hazard.
- Floor mats also become saturated with snow and water and may require replacement during the day. Extra mats should be kept on hand and changed out as needed.

Housekeeping staff should develop a schedule to monitor specific areas of a facility where snow, water, ice and salting materials may collect as employees and visitors enter throughout the day. Facility and janitorial staff will need to stay vigilant in their inspections of stairwells, landings, break rooms, restrooms and hallways as well.

Tools to Put Into Place

Written schedules, housekeeping checklists, maintenance procedures and other standard forms are all effective ways to monitor hazardous areas. Computer software applications are available for large facilities or customized checklists can be created easily by your own staff. Use your safety teams, wellness committees and facility personnel to develop your own materials to identify the specific areas to place on a housekeeping checklist. And be sure to refer to our website for samples of checklists and other helpful resources.

The image shows two overlapping forms. The top form is a 'Snow and Ice Removal Incident Report' from WalkSafe. It includes fields for 'Date of incident', 'Location', 'Status of person involved' (Visitor, Employee, Other), 'Name and address of person involved', 'Treatment' (None, First Aid, Medical), 'Description of incident by person involved', 'Name and address of witness', 'Description of incident by witness', 'Describe nature and extent of apparent injury', 'Emergency treatment given (person providing treatment to complete)', and 'Was physician called or consulted?'. The bottom form is a checklist with columns for 'Area', 'Inspected', 'Status', and 'Remarks'. It is also from WalkSafe and includes the UnitedHeartland logo and contact information for AF Group.

