



U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS CENTER

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National Safety Month: The ongoing problem with slips, trips and falls

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The National Safety Council — sponsor of National Safety Month — and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration have outlined slips, trips and falls as a key area of civilian injury prevention. There is longstanding agreement among national agencies tracking injury statistics that slips, trips and falls are one of the leading causes of unintentional injury in the United States, and the Army is no exception. The U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center's Civilian Injury Prevention Directorate recently conducted a trend analysis of fiscal 2013 workers' compensation claims and identified slips, trips and falls as a primary cause of civilian employee injury and associated costs.

The Army experiences its fair share of sprains, strains, contusions and injured backs from slips, trips and falls, spanning numerous occupations and occurring in every kind of workplace. Objective four of the Fiscal Year 2015 Safety and Occupational Health Objectives called on leaders to reduce accidents in this category by 10 percent from fiscal 2013's year-end totals. How is your location doing? Have you considered the following in your injury reduction efforts?

Slips, trips and falls can happen anywhere in your operation. In general, slips and trips occur due to a loss of traction between the shoe and walking surface or inadvertent contact with a fixed moveable object. Falls can be the result of a slip and/or trip or working on an unprotected, elevated surface (no guardrails and/or employee not wearing fall protection).

Due to the chance of extreme injury or death, we hear a lot about preventing falls from heights on industrial and construction sites. However, our trend analysis revealed most fall injuries occur at ground level. There were numerous instances involving employees who work as supply clerks and technicians, information technology specialists, police officers, nurses, firefighters and administrative assistants. Some scenarios included office workers who fell while walking down stairs, nurses who slipped on wet floors while tending their patients, and IT specialists who became entangled in and tripped over a mess of cords and cables.

Common hazards associated with slips, trips and falls include uneven walking surfaces, wet floors, clutter, electrical cords or cables, damaged or irregular steps, lack of handrails, and transitions between flooring types. Good housekeeping, supportive and slip-resistant footwear, regular inspections and hazard assessments followed by risk mitigation can help prevent many of these injuries.

Since tackling this problem will be an ongoing battle, the USACRC is developing several slips, trips and falls tools, including a training support package, to assist with accident reduction efforts. This package will contain a training video, lesson plan, presentation with templates for site-specific edits

and additions, posters and supporting reference materials. Once completed, it and other updated resources on employee safety will be available on the USACRC website at <https://safety.army.mil>.