

Health Care Risk Advisor

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Preventing Slip, Trip and Fall Injuries in the Health Care Industry

Health care providers are in the business of helping people. So, the last thing most of these organizations want is for an employee or patient to injure themselves at their facility. However, the unfortunate reality is that slip, trip and fall (STF) incidents are common in the health care industry.

In fact, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the incidence rate of lost-workday injuries from STFs on the same level in the health care industry was 38.2 per 10,000 employees, which was 90% greater than the average rate for all other private industries combined.

These incidents can result in serious injuries that impact health care workers' ability to do their job and often result in lost workdays, reduced productivity, workers' compensation claims and a reduced ability to care for patients.

What's more, OSHA has made STFs one of its five focus hazards in all its programmed and unprogrammed inspections in both hospitals, and nursing and residential care facilities.

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While the prospect of keeping up with the various hazards that can result in a STF incident can be daunting, health care providers that take a proactive approach to risk management can prevent many of these incidents. A great place to start is OSHA's recommendations for health care providers.

In particular, OSHA recommends that the following steps are taken in the workplace:

- Train staff members to keep walking-working surfaces dry and free of hazards, such as slush from people's boots and shoes tracked inside during winter weather and objects that have fallen on the floor.
- Train staff members to report and clean up spills immediately.
- Where wet processes are performed, provide drainage and false floors, platforms, mats or other dry standing places.
- Provide warning signs for wet floor areas.
- Create non-slip surfaces in slippery areas, such as toilet and shower areas, with no-skid wax.
- In carpeted areas, have carpets re-laid or stretched if they bulge or have become bunched.
- Provide floor outlets for equipment so that power cords do not need to run across pathways.
- When temporary electrical cords cross floors, tape or anchor them to the floor.
- Perform regular inspections to ensure floor surfaces are safe.
- Encourage employees to wear properly fitted, waterproof footwear to reduce STF hazards.