

# Slips, Trips And Falls

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Protect your employees and customers with a thorough housekeeping program and high-quality flooring

It's probably happened to most of us: a momentary lapse in attention that results in a slip, a stumble down the stairs or a misstep over an uneven surface. These events can often lead to more than just a red face and a bruised ego. In fact, millions of people a year seek emergency treatment for accidental falls.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, slips, trips and falls make up the majority of general industry accidents, which account for:

- 15 percent of all accidental deaths per year, the second-leading cause behind motor vehicles
- About 25 percent of all reported injury claims per fiscal year
- More than 95 million lost work days per year—about 65 percent of all work days lost

## The Root Cause

In general, floors become slippery when the surface is too smooth, or it has been improperly cleaned and maintained, causing contaminants, both wet and dry, to prevent contact between a shoe and the floor. When a shoe can no longer find traction on the floor, slips and falls occur.

Commercial kitchens and restaurants produce many hazards to the safety and slip-resistance of flooring material, including animal fats, stains, grease, chemicals, moisture, flames, bacteria and weight loads. Therefore, it's important for restaurant owners to take the necessary precautions to create a safe work environment. Preventive measures that have proven to be worth the time and investment include developing a detailed housekeeping program, which includes daily and semi-regular cleaning procedures, and installing high-quality slip-resistant flooring.

## The Role of Housekeeping

A detailed housekeeping program can help ensure the quality and consistency of necessary maintenance procedures. The program should be reviewed and updated regularly, and a written copy should be provided to all employees.

An effective program should outline:

- Where and how cleaning materials and products are stored
- When to use wet floor signs and barriers and where signs are stored
- When and how often specific areas of the facility should be cleaned
- What cleaning methods are appropriate for different areas and surfaces
- How to document and protect others from potentially hazardous changes in flooring that can result from excessive wear

When developing your housekeeping program, pay special attention to the cleaning methods used on the flooring surface. In order to help the product perform as intended and extend the serviceable life of the floor, you must follow all cleaning and maintenance guidelines outlined by the flooring manufacturer.

### Adopting Slip-Resistant Flooring

Slip-resistant surfaces are created when there is texture in the flooring. This can be achieved by manufacturing the product with a texture present throughout the entire material or applying a gritty material to the floor's surface. Both of these methods give the flooring the traction needed to be considered slip-resistant.

In addition to its tactile properties, to be classified as slip-resistant flooring must also be mechanically measured and verified according to its coefficient of friction. The coefficient of friction can be described as "the ratio between the force necessary to move one surface horizontally over another and the pressure between the two surfaces."

According to scientific measurements, most dry materials have friction coefficient values between 0.3 and 0.6. However, to be considered slip-resistant, flooring should have a coefficient of friction between 0.5 and 0.6 or higher, according to the ASTM D-2047 testing standards. Be sure to review

the flooring manufacturer's product data sheet on all flooring products being considered to verify and compare the product's coefficient of friction.

As you evaluate your facility, slip-resistant flooring should be specified for food-prep and cooking areas, walk-in coolers, break rooms and washrooms. In the front of the house, slip-resistant flooring should be specified for the entryway, dining area and restrooms. Special need areas include under rotisserie ovens, sushi bars, seafood stations and buffets.

For more information or to begin your research into the right slip-resistant flooring for your restaurant, check out the full list of certified high traction flooring on the National Floor Safety Institute's website at [www.nfsi.org](http://www.nfsi.org).

### Protect Your Business

As a restaurateur, your goal is to create a satisfying customer experience that includes providing enjoyable food and a relaxing atmosphere while also running an operation that is efficient enough to make a profit. Employee safety is a large factor in the efficiency of any business, especially the restaurant industry. Without proper attention to the housekeeping and slip-resistance of your flooring, slips and falls are a danger for people in many areas of the kitchen and restaurant, ultimately impacting your bottom line. You can help prevent slips and falls by specifying a slip-resistant flooring for your kitchen or restaurant and developing and maintaining a thorough housekeeping program to care for your slip-resistant floor.

Rob Satkowiak is a Technical Sales Representative for Oscoda Plastics, Inc., the manufacturer of Protect-All flooring. He has more than 17 years of experience in the commercial flooring industry and regularly conducts training and provides technical support to flooring installers and end consumers.