

Slip, trip, and fall prevention guide.

Let's hit the ground running (not slipping)

Slips, trips, and falls are one of the leading causes of workplace injuries—but most can be prevented with a little awareness and proactive care. This guide highlights common hazards and simple ways to help reduce risk across your property.



Slip and fall prevention program

A strong prevention program helps you spot and fix hazards before they lead to injuries. Focus on these key steps:

- 1. Train your team:** Teach employees how to recognize and fix hazards—from cleaning spills promptly to using wet floor signs correctly
- 2. Audit walkways regularly:** Document inspections and take quick action when issues are found
- 3. Make hazard reporting easy:** Encourage employees to report unsafe conditions right away
- 4. Test flooring for traction:** Identify slick surfaces and improve them with traction coatings or mats
- 5. Plan ahead for winter:** Create a written snow and ice maintenance plan before the season begins, including contracts for snow removal
- 6. Use mats wisely:** Outline where and when mats are used, and create an inspection and replacement schedule
- 7. Promote safe footwear:** Require slip-resistant shoes that fit your workplace conditions



Need help getting started?

EMC offers an online slip, trip, and fall prevention program template.

Housekeeping

Clutter and debris are among the easiest slip and trip hazards to prevent.

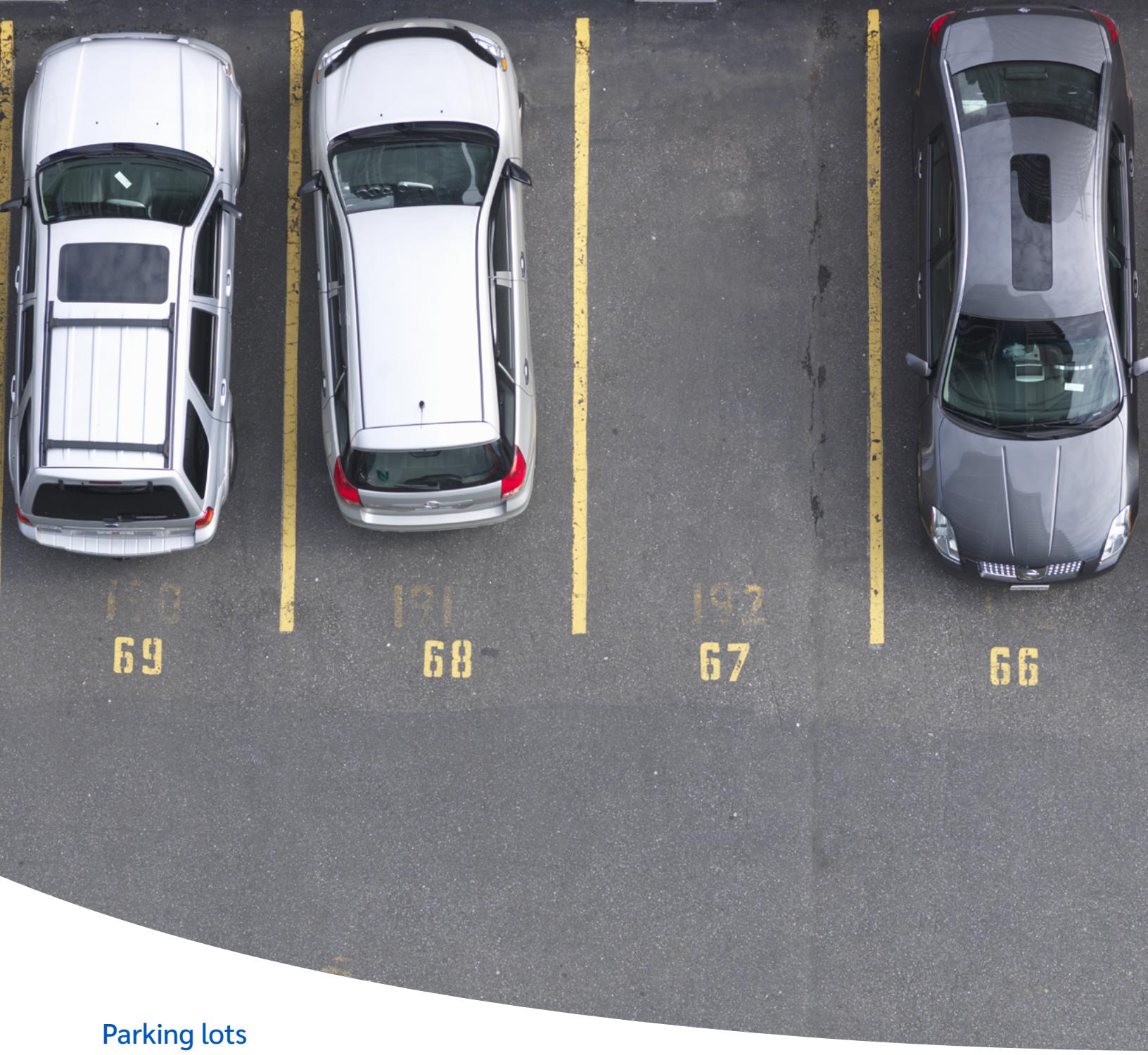
- Keep walkways clear:** Mark designated walking areas and keep them free of tools, boxes, and other obstructions
- Avoid low-lying obstacles:** Keep items off the floor and displays at knee level or higher
- Clean slippery surfaces:** Sawdust, powder, or other residues make floors slick—use grit strips or mats and sweep often
- Manage cords safely:** Avoid running cords across walkways; if needed, use ceiling drops, extra outlets, or high-visibility cord covers

Winter weather

Snow and ice can turn any walkway into a hazard.

Preparation is key.

- Stay ahead of storms:** Clear parking lots and sidewalks before employees arrive and check conditions throughout the day
- Prepare for changing conditions:** Place shovels, sand, and ice melt near doorways to enable a quick response to changing conditions
- Watch for refreeze:** Black ice often forms overnight; inspect and treat walkways regularly, and redirect downspouts away from walkways
- Use ice melt wisely:** Follow manufacturer directions to avoid slippery buildup or damage to flooring; and push the slush created by ice melt from sidewalks as soon as possible
- Pre-treat when possible:** Apply a liquid brine before storms to prevent ice from bonding to pavement
- Choose the right product:** Use ice melt suitable for the temperature range, and avoid applying it to concrete less than two years old



Parking lots

Outdoor areas can hide many slip and trip hazards, especially in poor lighting or bad weather.

- **Mark tire stops clearly:** Paint them a contrasting color and make sure they're centered in parking spaces
- **Repair potholes quickly:** Even small ones can collect water and cause slips or trips; gravel or paver base may be used as a temporary solution until permanent repairs can be made
- **Clean slick spots:** Address oil leaks and standing water promptly, and pressure wash as needed to remove residue or algae
- **Traffic safety:** Assure pedestrian paths and crossings are appropriately marked and vehicular traffic directions are clear and legible



Stairs and ramps

Falls on stairs and ramps are common but preventable.

- **Install sturdy handrails:** Place handrails on the right side (when descending) of any stairs with four or more risers—and both sides of ramps; choose rounded rails for a better grip (between 1¼–2 inches in diameter) and placed 30-34 inches above the stair tread
- **Increase visibility:** Add bright, contrasting edge markings or traction tape on stair treads and make sure illumination levels are appropriate and maintained
- **Repair damaged steps:** Replace or resurface cracked or uneven stairs and make sure riser height and tread run dimensions are appropriate for the angle of the stairs
- **Add traction to ramps:** Apply nonslip coatings or install traction strips, especially on wood or aluminum ramps that get slick when wet

Sidewalks and curbs

Small cracks or height changes can easily cause trips.

- **Level uneven surfaces:** A ¼" vertical change in elevation or a ½" gap between sidewalk sections should be grinded, filled, or replaced; mark hazards with slip-resistant paint or cones until repairs are made
- **Make curbs visible:** Paint curbs and ramps in a contrasting color like yellow; and consider installing a curb ramp with flared sides
- **Control landscaping:** Trim back vegetation and remove gravel or debris from walkways
- **Discourage shortcuts:** Place noticeable borders or obstacles to guide people along safe paths
- **Keep sidewalks open:** Use tire stops or bollards so parked cars don't block walkways; ensure the walking path is at least three feet wide at all times

Mats

Mats are your first line of defense—when used correctly.

- **Use the three-step system**
 1. Outdoor scraper mat
 2. Scraper or wiper mat just inside the door
 3. Walk-off wiper mat farther inside
- **Avoid patchwork mats:** Use large, single mats to cover entry areas instead of overlapping small ones; walk-off carpet tiles are another good option
- **Inspect regularly:** Clean or extract mats frequently, especially during wet weather; replace mats that are worn, curled, or slick
- **Keep mats in place:** Choose mats with slip-resistant backing or secure them with adhesive or tape to prevent movement
- **Add mats near water sources:** Place water-absorbing mats near fountains, sinks, and beverage stations to prevent drips from becoming hazards



Other issues

A few small habits can go a long way toward preventing slips and falls.

- **Provide step stools:** Don't let employees use chairs or unstable objects to reach high places; supply sturdy, rated step stools or ladders that safely support 250 pounds and include a top rail
- **Require proper footwear:** Prohibit open heels, spiked heels, and flip-flops; encourage slip-resistant footwear designed for your work environment
- **Know your floors:** Test floor traction to identify areas that need improvement
- **Use wet floor signs correctly:** Only display them when floors are actually wet; leaving them out too long can cause people to ignore them—or trip over them
- **Check lighting:** Replace burnt-out bulbs and ensure fixtures provide enough light for safe walking; adjust timers as seasons change

Addressing employee behaviors

Even with safe environments, personal awareness matters.

Encourage employees to:

- Stay on walkways and avoid shortcuts
- Look about 10–15 feet ahead for potential hazards
- Slow down near obstacles or wet areas
- Step carefully over cracks or raised edges—they're often taller than they look
- Look down when turning corners for low-lying objects
- Treat wet surfaces as if they're icy
- Don't assume mats catch all moisture—floors beyond them can still be slick
- Stay focused—stop walking when texting, reading, or talking on a phone
- Wear the right shoes for the conditions
- Keep hands free when entering or exiting vehicles to help maintain balance



Putting it all together

Preventing slips, trips, and falls isn't about one big change—it's about consistent habits that help protect people every day. Regular inspections, good housekeeping, and employee awareness all play a role in helping keep your workplace safe and productive.

Learn more

This guide covers the most common hazards, but every organization is different. Inspect your property regularly and create a safety policy that fits your needs.

For more tools and resources to help prevent slips, trips, and falls, visit emcinsurance.com and select Loss Control.



Learn more



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