

# Preventing Slips, Trips, & Falls



# Disclaimer

IMPORTANT NOTICE: This risk control training program provided by PMA Insurance Group is intended to help support your loss prevention efforts. It is not intended to be complete or definitive in discovering or identifying all hazards associated with your business, preventing workplace accidents, or complying with any safety related or other laws or regulations. You are encouraged to address the specific hazards of your business and have your legal counsel review all of your plans and company policies.

# Background

- Slips, trips, and falls are a leading cause of loss for healthcare facilities
- Healthcare facilities have a wide range of exposures from loading docks to swimming pools to performance stages
- Many falls never get reported
- Walking is often perceived as a simple task

***So why do we fall?***

# Three Factors Contributing to a Fall:

1. The shoe surface (sole)



2. The walking surface



3. A contaminant or object that comes in between (liquid or grease, a stick, a depression)

If we can control any of the three components, we can avert a fall.  
What can be controlled?

# Other factors.....

- Work tasks
- Work pace
- Inclement weather
- Negotiating objects
- Physical changes (aging)



# Example: Food Service Employee/Kitchen

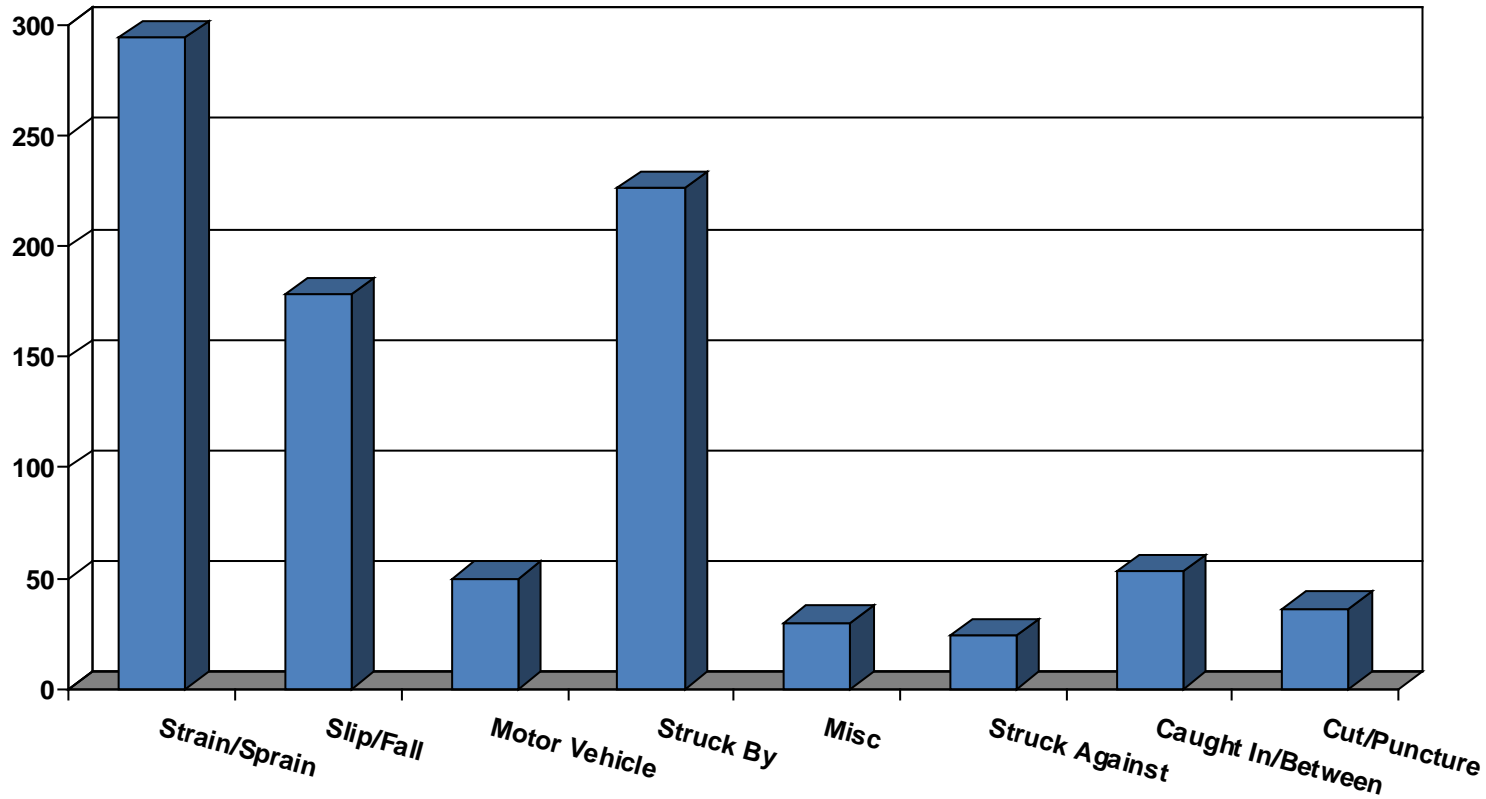
- Wet or contaminated floor
- Transitions and different floor surfaces
- Walk-in coolers/freezers
- Loading docks
- Trip hazards – electrical cords, food debris, boxes, supplies, mats, other people
- Weather issues (time clock location)

# Spread the Word to Reduce Slips, Trips, and Falls!

- Review loss trends
- Identify problem areas
- Identify controls in place
- Identify resources
- Involve everyone in the process

# Top Causes of Employee Injury

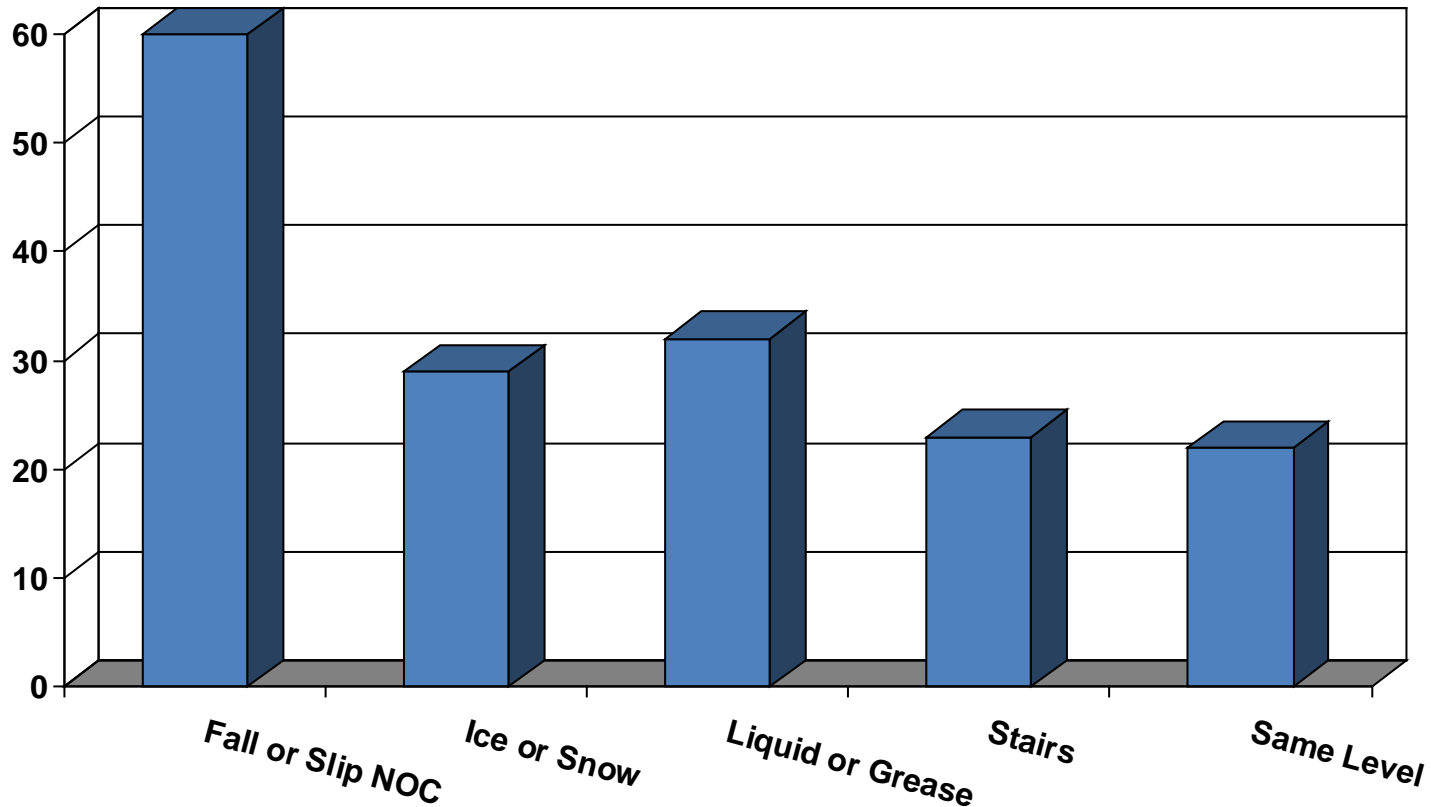
7/1/08 – 12/1/11



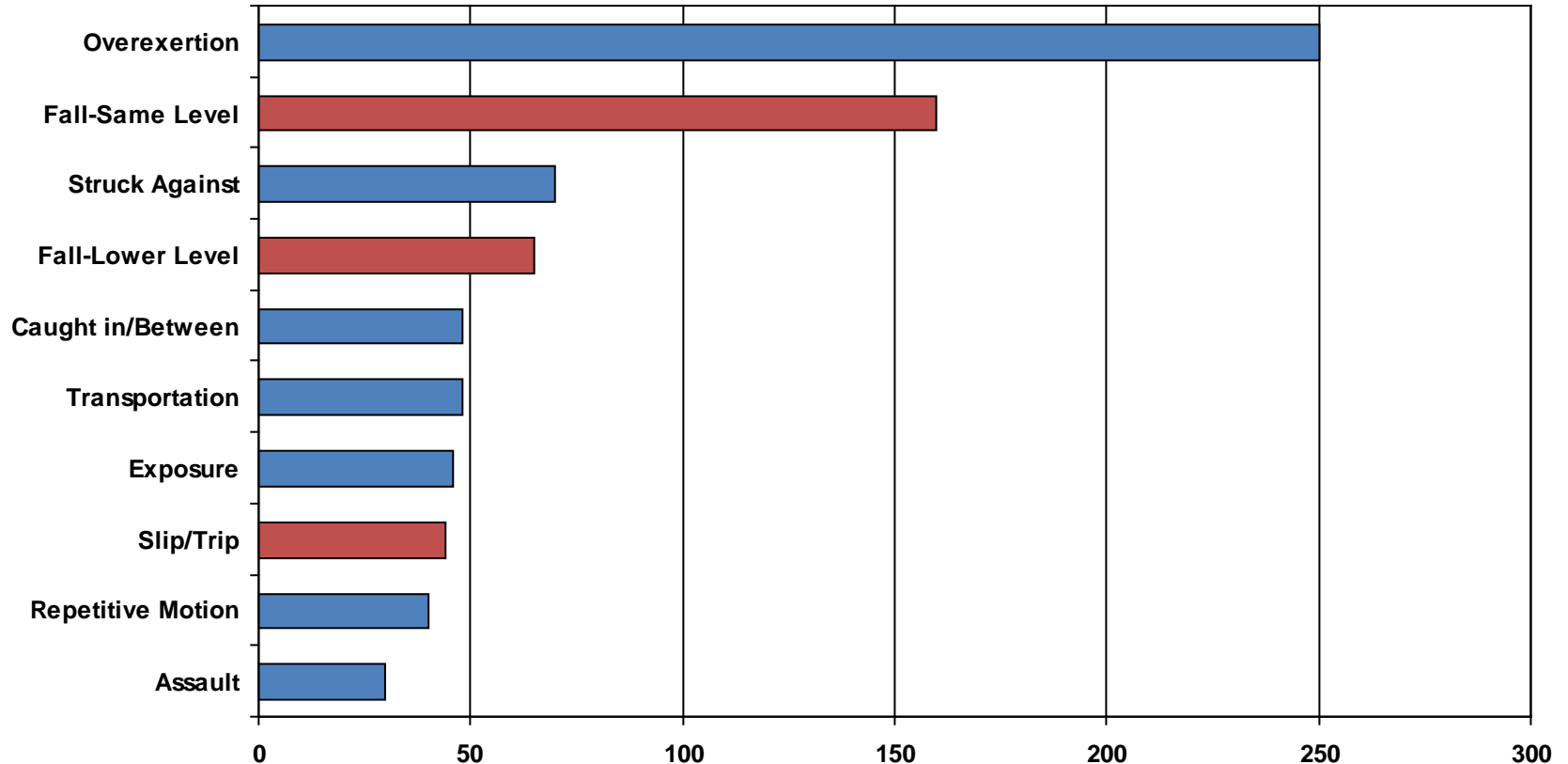


# Top Five Causes of Falls

7/1/08 – 12/1/11



# Non-Fatal Workplace Injuries by Event – 2008 National Safety Council



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

# Identify Problem Areas



- What do the loss trends say?
- Perform inspections
  - Multidisciplinary teams
  - Impromptu
  - Cover all shifts, areas, and seasons
- Test floor surfaces if needed

# What are Ways to Control Slips, Trips, Falls?

## Engineering Controls

Engineering – these controls reduce or eliminate hazards by changing processes, equipment or operations. Such as...

- Replace floor surfaces (coefficient of friction .500 or better)
- Provide appropriate patterns or markings (avoid confusing patterns on stairs)
- Floor coverings or mats for wet areas to increase friction
- Handrails

# What are Ways to Control Slips, Trips, Falls? Engineering Controls

Exterior engineering issues must be considered as well:

- Water run-off
- Eliminate steep steps or walkways
- Canopies over entrances
- Handrails
- No holes or drop-offs
- Maintain adequate lighting

# What are Ways to Control Slips, Trips, Falls?

## Administrative Controls

Administrative controls reduce or eliminate hazards through education and training, procedures, inspections, preventive maintenance, and other employer efforts such as:

- Floor care
- Use of walk-off mats at entrances, and special mats in wet areas
- Snow and ice removal policy
- Inspection programs
- Proper footwear
- Employee accident investigations

# Administrative Controls - Floor Cleaning is a SCIENCE!

## Actual cleaning

- Follow manufacturer specifications
  - Proper process
  - Proper chemicals
- Use of additives
- Wet mopping vs. microfiber\*
- Appropriate equipment

## Additional Processes

- Time of day
- “Re-routing” traffic
- Use of wet floor signs
- Drying method
- Audits/inspections

\*Proper mopping can prevent other workers' compensation losses

# Administrative Controls – Weather Related

- Designate parking areas
- Designate walking areas
- Provide ice melt and anti-skid materials
  - Keep ‘baggies’ of anti-skid materials
- Consider use of traction devices for first responders on snow/ice removal
- Consider warning signs





# Administrative Controls – Establish Rules!

- No door props or wedges – these get tripped over (and they can be a security concern!)
- No dryer sheets – these are very slippery on the floor
- Secure loose cables and wires
- Pick up loose objects
- No on-floor storage – people will miss it
- Clean spills and standing liquids immediately
- Do not set wet floor signs in doorways
- Remove wet floor signs once the floor has dried

# Administrative Controls – Inspections and Maintenance

- Daily checks by managers and supervisors
  - Major walking areas
  - Check employee compliance with policies
- Periodic inspections by designated personnel
  - Department or team inspections
  - Safety committee inspections
  - Routine maintenance inspections

# Inspections/Audits

- Conduct periodic audits of the facility and grounds
- Monitor areas where slip/fall accidents have occurred
- Note any problems or defects and assign corrective actions to appropriate personnel
- Document that corrective actions have been taken

Corrective actions could be much less expensive than a single slip and fall accident!

# Accident/Incident Investigations

- Should be conducted following injury or a “near miss”
- Identify what the employee was doing when they fell
- Be specific about the location, especially if there is an ongoing hazard
- Make observations about the environment – lighting, floor surface
- Was the employee moving quickly? Carrying anything?
- Did weather conditions play any part in the incident?
- What type of footwear was the person wearing?

**Ask “why” questions to determine how the fall occurred.**

**Determine what corrective actions should be taken.**

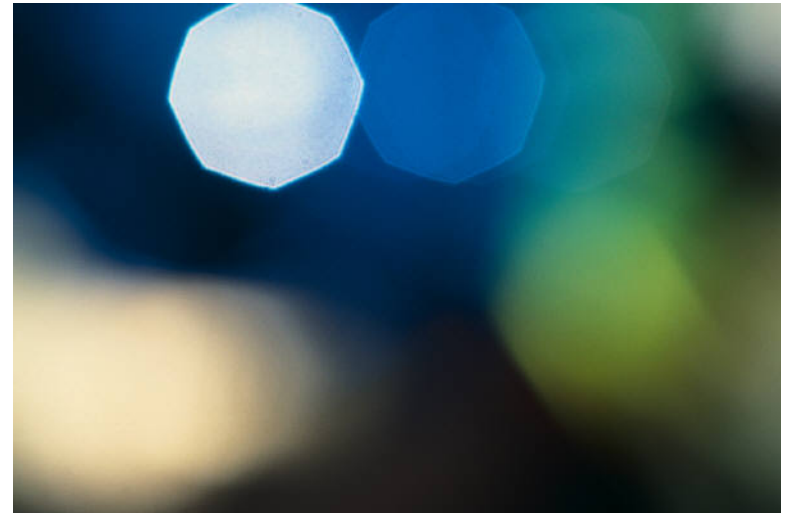
# Reminders – Stairs

- Face forward and hold onto the handrail
- Walk, don't run
- Pay attention! Don't talk on cell phones or text while on stairs
- If you are carrying a load, take the elevator if available
- Risers should be even, between 7" and 11" high
- Report any problems with the step surface or nosing



# Reminders – Visibility

- Good visibility is essential for the prevention of slips, trips, and falls
- Review your facility and grounds at different times of the day and seasons of the year to determine if lighting is adequate
- Consider times when visitors, vendors, and employees are on the premises
- Provide additional lighting for walking surfaces as needed



# Reminders – Footwear



- Remind employees to dress for the job and the weather
  - Wear boots and carry shoes to get into work
- Shower shoes/boots can be used over footwear in bathing environments
- Function over fashion! Footwear must be secure, cover the foot, and provide some friction. Beware of smooth or worn soles.

# Reminders – Spills



- Monitor areas that are susceptible to spills
- Strategically locate clean-up tools and supplies for ready access
- Train employees to promptly clean up spills
- Use warning signs to identify areas that are wet from mopping and cleaning



# Reminders – Daily Activities

## Prevent a fall by planning ahead *before* performing work activities

- Bathing – pick up used towels, wipe floors, wear slip-resistant footwear
- Lifting or transfers – move non-essential items out of the way
- Lock equipment in place so it doesn't move
- Clean only one side of a hall or room at a time; never stretch cords across a hall or walkway



# Reminders – General Conditions

- Inspect walking and working surfaces for condition and maintenance
- Repair unstable surfaces such as loose tiles or torn carpet
- Secure mats, rugs, or carpet that does not lay flat
- Keep floors clean and dry; remove obstructions and tripping hazards
- Routinely monitor any walking surfaces that are periodically wet or icy such as sidewalks, entrances, or walk-in coolers/freezers
- Have a formal snow removal program in place
- Conditions change quickly both inside and out; be alert!

# Conclusion

## **Slips, trips, and falls can be prevented through:**

- Review of the history and premises to note existing and potential problems
- Routine housekeeping and preventive maintenance programs
- Regular audits to observe walking surface conditions
- Ongoing corrective actions to address hazards
- Prompt accident/incident investigations