



Risktopics

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Floor cleaning procedures for slip, trip and fall prevention

Introduction

In the U.S., there are more than one million people injured from slip, trip, and fall incidents every year. It is important to recognize the significance of these types of injuries, as claims from slips, trips, and falls cost, on average, approximately \$25,000 - \$28,000 according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The most common injuries are joint injuries, typically to the back, wrist, elbow, shoulder, and knee.

There are many factors that contribute to slip, trip, and fall incidents, one of which is improper floor cleaning. To ensure proper floor cleaning procedures are in place, a formalized cleaning program should be established. The following information can serve as a guideline for establishing a floor-cleaning program.

Cleaning program

A program should be established to ensure that regular cleaning of floors is conducted at a facility. A cleaning program should establish cleaning schedules and contain, at a minimum, the following elements:

- Cleaning schedules should be determined and considerations be given to peak hours, traffic patterns and weather conditions.
- The drying time of the area that is being cleaned should also be considered when establishing the schedule.
- Appropriate barricades should be used to redirect pedestrians.
- All cleaning should be documented and inspection logs maintained.
- As part of the program, written procedures on floor cleaning need to be established and updated as needed (i.e. when a new floor surface is in place, when new cleaning products are used, if the work environment has changed, if new exposures are present, etc). This evaluation will ensure their effectiveness.
- The written procedures should also be evaluated periodically to ensure they are being followed and are effective.

Appropriate Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) should be obtained and employees trained properly on the use of personal protection and application procedures to reduce the exposure. The minimum requirements for this

training can be found in the HAZCOM requirements of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Training

When implementing a cleaning program, training employees on cleaning policies and procedures is crucial to the success of the program. Employees should be aware of overall housekeeping procedures, as well as specific cleaning procedures for high hazard areas. Employees should be trained and retrained as necessary, such as when a new floor surface is in place, when new cleaning products are used, if the work environment has changed, if new exposures are present, if a new employee is hired, etc. The following factors should be considered when training is provided:

- All areas should be checked to ensure proper drainage is in place.
- All areas should be highly visible.
- All areas should be cleaned thoroughly (no short cuts).
- All equipment should be checked to be sure it is clean and in good condition.
- All equipment should be checked to make sure that the right equipment is used for the floor surface.

Products

All cleaning products should be thoroughly researched to ensure they are suitable for the floor surface. The products should be tested on a small section of the floor, prior to use, to ensure the product is suitable for the floor surface. Many suppliers and manufactures of floor cleaning products provide technical support in selection of appropriate products for specific types of floor and needs. Cleaning products should be tested prior to purchase to ensure quality. (This could also save you from buying expensive products that do not work).

Follow all manufacturers' instructions on safety and application. Products from different vendors should not be mixed together, as the products might not be compatible. If products are improperly mixed, it could cause the product not to work as expected. Provide training for using, mixing and applying products, as well as maintaining all cleaning equipment. Many product vendors provide assistance with selection and even technical training.

Equipment

All facilities should have the proper cleaning materials readily available for their operations. Equipment should be separate for different areas of the facility, rather than using the same mop throughout the entire premises. Equipment may need to be color coded or marked to ensure employees use the proper equipment for designated areas. If an area needs to be blocked off for cleaning, employees should know how to set up signage and equipment properly. When using signage, it is important to ensure signs are highly visible and do not pose a slip, trip, or fall hazard. Signage should also be used in conjunction with cleaning up spills/debris, not just as a deterrent. All equipment should be cleaned prior to use, regularly inspected, and maintained.

Provide employees with the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) to ensure they avoid contact with contaminated materials.

Cleaning procedures

Proper cleaning procedures should be followed for dust mopping, scrubbing, stripping, and applying floor finish. There are common elements to the cleaning process. Before each step in cleaning, you must ensure that the equipment is clean, in good condition and appropriate for the floor surface. The floor area that is to be cleaned should be blocked off. Once the cleaning process is completed, employees need to clean up equipment immediately after the procedure. The equipment should be thoroughly washed, allowed to dry, and all equipment should be stored in the proper location.

Color-coded mops and buckets should be provided for the different areas to be cleaned. This will prevent the spread of foreign substances from one area to another and reduce the possibility that you will spread these substances while you are cleaning a spill.

The basic cleaning procedures are outlined below.

Dust mopping

Dust mop floor

- Remove all debris.
- Hold mop at a 45-degree angle and push mop straight ahead. Do not push backwards and avoid lifting up mop.
- Use a small dust mop for obstructed areas, such as office or classroom.
- When mopping, start at entrance and work from sides to center of room.
- If furniture is easily moved, move and mop where furniture was located.
- Use dust pan and broom to sweep up trash (have the trash container close).
- When floor is clean, brush out the dust mop with a stiff bristle brush or place the dust mop head in a plastic liner and shake it several times.
- Treat dust mop at end of cleaning procedures.
- Replace mop head when soiled.
- Hang dust mop with yarn facing away from the walls.

Floor scrubbing

Scrubbing

- Operate floor machine from side to side while applying solution.
- Overlap on each pass to ensure that the entire floor has been covered.
- Avoid bumping the baseboards and other fixed objects.
- Use a hand pad and holder to scrub corners and other areas not accessible to the floor machine.

Pick up dirty solution

- Use a wet pick-up vacuum or remove the dirty solution with the first mop.
- Dip the clean second mop into the clear water and rinse (double bucket procedure).
- Wring out the wet mop frequently.
- Cover the entire area to be cleaned.
- Wipe off baseboards before they dry.

When floor has dried

- Remove the wet floor signs.
- Return furniture and other items cleared from the area to their proper positions.

Applying floor finish

Apply first coat of seal

- Pour floor finish into lined mop bucket and place a clean non rusty wringer into the bucket.
- Immerse clean mop into the finish.
- Wring out mop to eliminate dripping.
- Apply a thin coat of finish to the floor.
- Apply floor finish by running floor finish applicator mop parallel to and next to the baseboard.
- Do not apply in vertical portions of baseboards and walls.
- Work in "u" shape around baseboards and work outward in.
- Use additional finish, as needed, per manufacturer instructions and cover the entire floor.
- Try to avoid splashing the floor finish.
- Before applying another coat, allow finish to dry completely.

Apply second coat of seal

- Repeat the above instructions.
- You may wish to avoid building up edges by keeping a few inches away from the baseboards.
- Apply a thin coat of finish.

- The second application should be made using the "figure 8" pattern, which reduces back fatigue.
- Allow second coat to dry completely.

Additional coats

- Repeat the above instructions using the same floor finish for the next two coats and all subsequent ones.
- More coats allow more protection for the floor and a better appearance.
- Apply at least two coats of finish over the seal, if a high speed burnishing program is used.
- Allow floor to dry as long as possible before opening to traffic.

Floor stripping

Apply stripping solution

- Spread floor stripping solution over area with mop.
- Allow solution to work on floor for recommended time (usually at least 5 minutes). Do not allow the stripper to dry.

Machine scrub

- Place floor stripping pad under floor machine.
- Scrub lengthwise along the baseboards.
- Strip side to side over the remaining area.
- Use hand scrub pad to detail strip along the edges and in corners of the room.
- Heel floor machine on badly soiled spots.
- Do not splash stripper on walls.

Pick up dirty solution

- Use a wet pick-up vacuum to remove stripper solution from the floor.
- Do not allow the dirty solution to dry on the floor.

Rinse and dry floor

- Use clean mop and clean water.
- Add floor stripping neutralizer to water.
- Cover area with neutralizer and rinse water.
- Use wet pick-up vacuum to pick up rinse water.
- Wipe baseboards before they dry.

Final rinse

- Damp mop the floor with clear water for the final rinse and to ensure that all stripper solution has been removed.

Summary

Developing and implementing a formal cleaning program is one way to assist in reducing slip, trip, and fall incidents. There are many different cleaning products available, so it is important to follow all manufacturers' instructions, as well as diligently researching all products to ensure quality and compatibility with floor surfaces. Additionally, while properly following cleaning procedures is an important step to reducing slip trip and fall exposures, you still need to conduct an effective analysis of the exposures at your location. Train staff to immediately report all instances of slips, trips and falls so that action to reduce the exposure can be immediately taken.

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