Slip, Trip & Fall Prevention – The Basics

What do a hanger, cardboard and wet leaves have in common? They and other objects on a walking surface can lead to significant injuries.

In a recent 100 day period, significant claims were reported from three separate individuals, with one each slipping on a clothes hanger on the floor, a sheet of cardboard on the floor, and wet leaves on a set of stairs. These three claims will account for more than $500,000 in medical and lost time benefits, as well as increased insurance costs for the companies in which they incurred.

Based on a study of 2,400 slip, trip and fall claims (excluding those on snow and ice) reported to United Heartland, the primary causes of slips, trips and falls were:
- Contaminants on surface (water, food, sand, oil, etc.)
- Obstructions in the path of travel (boxes, pallets, mats/rugs, chairs, cords, etc.)

Because obstructions and contaminants can be as varied as the number of claims occurring, it is critical that all businesses take a systematic approach to addressing these causes which impact everyone.

To address these issues within your organization, a comprehensive slip, trip and fall prevention program should be developed that includes the following elements.

Housekeeping
- Keep paths of travel free from obstructions and contaminants.
- Promptly clean up spills.
- Have a place for everything and put everything in its place; don't permit clutter.
- Utilize wet floor signs as necessary; remove them promptly once the floor is dry.

Awareness
- Educate employees on common sources of slips, trips and falls in the organization.
- Instruct employees about how their selection of footwear impacts their likelihood to slip and fall.
- Train employees on the organization's housekeeping requirements.
- Ensure employees look where they are going.
- Encourage employees to look out for each other and address contaminants and obstructions in the path of travel.
- Teach employees how to inspect for slip, trip and fall hazards.
- Remind employees on the importance of using handrails when going up or down stairs.

Footwear
- Evaluate all work areas and identify the appropriate types of footwear for the work environment. Consideration needs to be given to slip/fall hazards, falling objects, hot objects, vehicular traffic, and puncture hazards.
- Ensure supervisors enforce the use of proper footwear.
Inspections

- Conduct routine inspections of walking surfaces.
- The frequency of the inspection depends upon the amount of traffic and likelihood of contaminants or obstructions being present. In high traffic areas in restaurants, hourly inspections may be needed. In other facilities, inspections may only need to occur once per day.
- These inspections do not need to be formal, but staff do need to be held accountable for conducting them.

Engagement

- Have all employees routinely conduct walking surface inspections.
- Reward employees for identifying fixes to actual and potential slip, trip and fall hazards.

New Construction/Remodeling

Anytime you are undertaking remodeling or new construction of facilities, this is the best time to choose proper flooring surfaces. Surfaces need to be selected that are appropriate for the intended use of the area. Many flooring surface materials are available that have a high coefficient of friction, which is one key to preventing slips and falls on contaminated surfaces.

United Heartland encourages all businesses to work with their employees to address slip, trip and fall hazards in the workplace; your Loss Control representative would be more than happy to assist in your efforts.