

## Slips and Falls – Prevention Tips

Slips and falls are the greatest source of general liability insurance claims among ProHost USA clients and the restaurant industry overall. The following recommendations, developed in part from information provided by OSHA and ISSA, can help most restaurants lower their risks for slip-and-fall incidents.

### Hazard Identification

- Regularly review all the slip-and-fall incident reports associated with your facility and understand the critical factors associated with them. Look for trends in location, time of day, and other factors and focus staff training on your cleaning procedures for these factors. Train your workers how to properly respond to slip-and-fall incidents.
- It's also important that staff understand the importance of reporting incidents and conditions that could result in incidents, *even if none have actually occurred*. These will be your first indication of a potential issue that should be addressed. Implement a program and train employees to recognize wet floors and immediately post a "wet floor" sign/cone in the affected area until the floor is cleaned and dry.
- Provide adequate lighting through public areas, including emergency lighting in good operating condition.
- Make sure all floor level changes are clearly marked, well lit, and handrails are provided as needed. Train host/hostess to point out level changes to customers when seating them.

### Exterior Hazards

- Parking lots should be well illuminated and marked for traffic control with direction signs posted.
- Parking areas and sidewalks are to be maintained in good condition and free of cracks and/or holes. Exterior steps must have secure handrails.
- Remove snow and ice promptly from parking lot and walkway surfaces.

### Flooring

- Select high-traction, slip-resistant flooring materials when you build, expand or remodel facilities. Installation of such materials with proven high traction characteristics is one of the best ways to avoid slip-and-fall issues.
- Know what the "out-of-the-box" slip resistance is on the floor materials in your facility. These numbers provide a baseline when considering changes to cleaning and floor maintenance practices. Have flooring coefficient of friction (COF) audited after installation to confirm slip resistance.

### **Cleaning Products**

- Select floor cleaning and maintenance products with proven slip resistance characteristics that are compatible with the particular flooring surfaces in your facility. Good places to start are materials certified by the National Floor Safety Institute ([www.nfsi.org](http://www.nfsi.org)).
- Verify with the cleaning personnel that they are familiar with and are using the correct application procedures. If there is a change in personnel or contractor, monitor usage again.
- Remove any unauthorized or incompatible cleaning products and educate staff of the potentially dangerous consequences using the wrong products can have on the slip resistance of flooring surfaces.
- Separate cleaning materials and equipment between the “front of the house” and “back of the house” to reduce the likelihood of transporting a problem from one area to another. Color coding materials can provide instant recognition for personnel using the wrong equipment in the wrong area of the facility.

### **Carpet Runners and Mats**

- Ensure that permanently installed features like carpet runners and mats are included in the maintenance and housekeeping program. These materials need to be regularly inspected for the buildup of contaminants and deterioration that could lead to the creation of fall hazards.
- Limit the difference in heights between flooring surfaces and mats to no more than ¼” to ½”. Frequently inspect mats to ensure they have not buckled or curled. Make sure that your mats are firmly secured to the floor to prevent migration and that the floor beneath the mat is clean and dry. Make sure to evaluate the condition of these changes in height since they can deteriorate and create trip hazards.
- One of the surest ways to prevent the transmission of grease, water and other materials from the “back of the house” to the “front of the house” is to implement a good mat program. Ensure the mats are frequently inspected and checked regularly for wear and the buildup of contaminants. A poorly managed and maintained mat program can significantly increase your likelihood of reducing the slip resistance of flooring surfaces.

### **Employee Training**

- Train employees about established safety procedures, cleaning operations, and inspection procedures.
- Train workers to apply floor cleaning and maintenance products in accordance with the manufacturer’s recommendations.
- Post written slip and fall prevention and accident handling policies in conspicuous places.

- Keep records of all employee training including individuals trained, subject matter covered, training materials, and date of training.

**Employee Footwear**

- Consider foreseeable conditions in the employee walking/working environment. For those employees that may be exposed to oily, wet or otherwise slippery walking surfaces, provide access to slip resistant footwear and make it a requirement.
- Establish whether the company will provide, reimburse or use payroll deduction for employee purchase of specific shoes.
- Consult with your supplier or manufacturer of footwear to select shoes that are the most appropriate for the situation.

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*ProHost USA, Inc. is an insurance program administrator founded in 1989 and based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. For more than 25 years, ProHost has insured restaurants and related risks working with independent retail insurance agents across the country that recognize the value of their extensive underwriting expertise. To learn more, visit [www.prohostusa.com](http://www.prohostusa.com).*