

Slips, trips and falls – Boots and traction aids

OHS information for employers, supervisors, and workers

KEY INFORMATION

- The potential for slips, trips and falls is everywhere.
- Be aware that traction aids could also cause a fall or trip if used incorrectly.

Footwear that is made to be worn in one condition or season may not be effective in other situations. For example, winter footwear must provide enough insulation to prevent cold exposure injuries, enough traction for the surface they will be used on and still protect against other hazards that may be present due to the work task or environment. Footwear that meet these needs may not be effective in warmer or slippery conditions – such as on mud or wet leaves.

Slip, trip and fall hazards can occur in:

- transition areas between the outside and the inside (uneven or slippery floor surfaces),
- while products are being unloaded (empty pallets, debris or spills),
- while working at heights (using ladders or getting into or out of a vehicle), and
- while going from one part of the workplace to another.

Common conditions

Common slip, trip, and fall conditions that footwear must be able to protect against are:

- wet conditions - soft rubber soles will offer the best slip resistance on slippery surfaces. A 38-cm (15 inch) rise may allow for lower leg protection and prevent water from entering into the boot. Waterproof or water resistant materials are recommended such as rubber, polyurethane or leather.
- extreme weather conditions - some boots have thermal polyurethane soles that don't become brittle in cold temperatures and offer better traction, similar to a winter tire. Insulating liners can be removed if it becomes wet or if it is too hot to wear.
- snow and ice conditions - an aggressive tread and sole pattern may increase traction.

Depending on the work environment, footwear may need to be suitable for all of the previously mentioned weather conditions. Several styles and fits of boots are available. Ensure that all boots are CSA approved where required and meet all site requirements for footwear. Proper selection, fit testing, maintenance and inspection of boots is proper practice. Defective footwear should be replaced or repaired.

Traction aids and grips

A great method to mitigate the risk of injury due to slips, trips and falls is to clear materials from surfaces and, if possible, apply grit or other traction aids to the ground and/or footwear. For situations where the risk of slips, trips and falls on icy and slippery surfaces still remains, altering your walking pattern and erecting handrails can help mitigate risk.

Various styles of traction aids are available each with varying characteristics suitable for different environments. When selecting the best traction aid for a worker to wear, consider:

- the surface the traction aid will be used on,
- boot styles and sizes the traction aid will need to fit,
- role of the traction aid for the hazard in combination with the boot sole for the working conditions,
- tasks to be completed while wearing traction aids, and
- hazards the traction aid may add to the work and possible controls.

Traction aids may have various characteristics each with advantages and disadvantages. Be aware that traction aids could also cause a trip or fall if used on an unsuitable surface such as tile when moving from outdoors to indoors, creating uneven surfaces or new slipping hazards like metal on ceramic.

About the OHS Prevention Initiative

The [OHS Prevention Initiative](#) is a partnership between the Alberta government, employers, workers, health and safety associations, labour organizations, service providers (consultants, trainers and auditors) and WCB-Alberta. Its aim is preventing workplace injury and illness.

Contributors to this resource

Alberta Construction Safety Association
 Alberta Forest Products Association
 Alberta Hotel and Lodging Association
 Alberta Motor Transport Association
 Alberta Municipal Health and Safety Association
 AgSafe Alberta
 Continuing Care Safety Association
 Energy Safety Canada
 Leducor Group of Companies

For more information

Occupational health and safety hazardous footwear
ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li050

Prevention Initiative slips, trips, and falls
ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/slips-trips-and-falls

Other resources

WCB-Alberta – Worker handbook
wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/workers/worker_handbook.pdf

WCB-Alberta – Forms and guides
wcb.ab.ca/resources/for-employers/forms-and-guides/

Government of Alberta OHS resource portal
ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/

© 2022 Government of Alberta

This material is for information only. The information provided in this material is solely for the user's information and convenience and, while thought to be accurate and functional, it is provided without warranty of any kind. The Crown, its agents, employees or contractors will not be liable to you for any damages, direct or indirect, arising out of your use of the information contained in this material. If in doubt with respect to any information contained within this material, or for confirmation of legal requirements, please refer to the current edition of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, Regulation and Code or other applicable legislation. Further, if there is any inconsistency or conflict between any of the information contained in this material and the applicable legislative requirement, the legislative requirement shall prevail. This material is current to May 2022. The law is constantly changing with new legislation, amendments to existing legislation, and decisions from the courts. It is important that you keep yourself informed of the current law. This material may be used, reproduced, stored or transmitted for non-commercial purposes. The source of this material must be acknowledged when publishing or issuing it to others. This material is not to be used, reproduced, stored or transmitted for commercial purposes without written permission from the Government of Alberta.

Visit alberta.ca/PreventionInitiative

©2022 Government of Alberta | May 2022 | OHS Prevention Initiative | PIS017

