Slips, Trips and Falls — study guide

Slips, trips and falls are the most common cause of major injury at work — and on a moving ship they can start a chain of far worse accidents. This guide covers the causes and the controls.[1]

Why it matters

Slips, trips and falls are the most common cause of major **injury** in the workplace: **95%** of major slips result in broken bones, and they can also be the initial cause of a range of other accidents, such as **falls from height**. If a person cannot see where they are going, there is always a risk of a slip or trip.

What causes them

Causes include protruding objects, service lines and hoses running across the deck; missing or removed grates, plates or manholes; and improperly marked or closed access holes. Environmental conditions can make moving around the ship difficult and increase risk: vessel movements, changes in weather conditions, and changes in surf conditions. Negative and complacent attitudes toward health and safety, where workers do not take responsibility, increase the risk of accidents.

The Trip Potential Triangle

The Trip Potential Triangle has three elements: **walkways**, **design and maintenance**, and **housekeeping**.

Controls

To reduce the risk of slips, trips and falls, personnel should clean up spills immediately, dispose of waste materials appropriately, store goods safely, and wear sensible footwear. To control contamination and stop it spreading into other areas, use mats at internal/external interfaces and fit drip trays under machines and racking.

Key facts to remember

- Slips, trips and falls = most common cause of major injury; 95% of major slips break bones; can lead to falls from height.
- Causes: protruding objects/hoses on deck, missing grates/plates/manholes, improperly marked or closed access holes.
- Environment: vessel movements, weather changes, surf changes. Complacent attitudes raise risk.
- Trip Potential Triangle: walkways, design and maintenance, housekeeping.
- Personnel: clean spills at once, dispose of waste, store goods safely, wear sensible footwear.
- Contamination control: mats at interfaces, drip trays under machines and racking.

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Sources

1. Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seafarers (COSWP) — Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) (slips, trips and falls on board).