

In This Issue

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Employer Safety Responsibilities

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OSHA's "Competent Person"

Under the OSH Law, employers have a responsibility to provide a safe workplace. A short summary of some of the key employer responsibilities include:

Slips, Trips, and Falls

- Provide a workplace free from serious hazards and comply with standards, rules and regulations issued under the OSH Act.
- Examine workplace conditions to make sure they conform to applicable OSHA standards
- Make sure employees have and use safe tools and equipment and properly maintain this equipment.
- Use color codes, posters, labels, or signs to warn employees of potential hazards.
- Establish or update operating procedures and communicate them so that employees follow safety and health requirements.
- Post at a prominent location within the workplace, the OSHA poster (or the state-plan equivalent) informing employees of their rights and responsibilities.
- Report to the nearest OSHA office within 8 hours any fatal accident or one that results in the hospitalization of three or more employees.
- Keep records of work-related injuries and illnesses.
- Provide employees, former employees, and their representatives access to the Log of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses (OSHA Form 300), Posted from Feb 1 to April 30.



Elements of an Effective Accountability System

Responsibilities, Authority & Accountability

Top/Mid-level Managers

- Follow company safety rules
- Enforce safety and health rules
- Arrange safety and health training

Supervisors

- Manage safety controls
- Follow and enforce safety rules
- Conduct safety meetings

Employees

- Comply with safety and health rules
- Report injuries and hazards

These are just some of the responsibilities of employers and not a completely comprehensive list. More information can be found at [OSHA's Employer Responsibility](#) page.

OSHA's "Competent Person"

The term "Competent Person" is used on many OSHA standards and documents. An OSHA "competent person" is defined as "one who is capable of identifying existing predictable hazards in the surroundings or working conditions which are unsanitary, hazardous, or dangerous to employees, and who has the authorization to take prompt corrective measures to eliminate them" [29 CFR 1926.32(f)]. By way of training and/or experience, a competent person is knowledgeable of applicable standards, is capable of identifying workplace hazards, relating to the specific operation, and has the authority to correct them. Some standards add additional specific requirements which must be met by the competent person.





Risks Associated with Slips, Trips and Falls

- Level changes
- Adequacy of illumination
- Contamination/ Spills
- Notice of floor hazards
- Potential for distraction
- Characteristics of footwear
- Person's stride
- Vision
- Weight
- Ergonomic issues while carrying packages



Slips, Trips and Falls

In public places, slips and falls occur more frequently than any other type of accident. Along with the alarming frequency of these accidents, slips and falls can result in severe disabling injuries especially to the head and back.

Although vehicular accidents lead the accidents statistics year after year, falls continue to remain the next leading cause of disabling injuries and deaths, particularly among the elderly.

Falls can be from same

level or from different levels. Falls from different levels generally tend to be low frequency but high severity and are more common among workers in the construction segment. Slips and trips are more common in same level falls. In addition to the concern for STF accidents in public places such as hotels, retail establishments and healthcare facilities, these accidents account for 20-25% of worker injuries in many segments.

Causation for STF accidents is often more complicated than they appear. Different fac-

tors affect slip trips and falls and are noted in the sidebar. Selection of floor surfaces and addressing maintenance issues are some of the single most important factors that are within an employers control. Reinforcing good housekeeping will also lead to a reduction in slips, trips and falls as well as other types of injuries. Having people bring to attention these hazards is the first step in avoiding the potential for a STF accident. More information can be found on [OSHA's Walking/ Working Surfaces](#) Safety Topics page.

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Elements of an Effective Accountability System

Elements of an effective accountability system

Any accountability system should have the following elements to be effective:

- **Established standards** in the form of company policies, procedures, or rules that clearly convey standards of performance in safety and health to employees (Employee handbooks and Safety Manuals)
- **Resources** needed to meet the standards, such as a safe and healthful workplace, effective training, and adequate oversight of work operations.
- **A measurement system** which specifies acceptable performance.
- **Consequences**, both positive and negative.
- **Application at all levels**

When managers and employees are held accountable for their safety and health responsibilities, they are more likely to press for solutions to safety and health problems than to present barriers. By implementing an accountability system, positive involvement in the safety and health program is created. OSHA's [Safety & Health Management Systems eTool](#)