Workplan:

Planning to Reduce Slips, Trips, and Falls

Slip, trips, and falls can be costly for businesses in more ways then just one. Injuries can lead to temporary or permanent disability for employees, resulting in time off work, decreased productivity, increased insurance costs, and the costs of replacing an experienced employee.

Falls on the same level and falls to a lower level are the second and third leading causes of disabling work-relating injuries (overexertion being the first), according to a Workplace Safety Index study. In the United States alone, ot is estimated that these two causes cost businesses $10.6 billion and $5.5 billion respectively. That results in over $310 million lost each week to something that is preventable! Luckily, by taking appropriate steps, you can reduce the likelihood of slips, trips, and falls in your workplace.

Step 1: Identify Hazards

There are two types of hazards that cause slips, trips, and falls: unsafe conditions and unsafe acts. It is important to check the workplace for both types of hazards.

Unsafe Conditions

Here, you are looking for poorly lit areas, unsafe stairwells and railings, unsafe flooring and surfaces, and any other environmental factor that makes it easy for employees to lose their balance. To see more about these unsafe conditions, refer to our Be a Better Supervisor section on this topic.

Unsafe Acts

Unsafe acts are habits employees do that increase their risk of slipping, tripping, or falling. It's almost impossible to watch your employees all at the same time so you need be be there are certain behaviors to watch for like skipping steps, running up or down stairs, not looking where they are going, and not using handrails.

Obviously, some people can succeed without an injury, but overall, rushing, running, and taking shortcuts increases their danger.

Step 2: Fixing Conditions

After you know the slip, trip, and fall hazards from unsafe conditions, there are a few actions you can take to improve things:

1. Repair the hazard If there is damage to necessary parts of the workplace environment, fix them if you can. This could be replacing burnt bulbs, fixing loose tile, replacing a leaking pipe, or installing a new handrail.

2. Changing processes Sometimes the hazard isn't because of damage but perhaps the result of a process. *For example, a machine process may release steam onto the floor, making the floor more slippery.*
In these cases, it may be worthwhile to consider ways to reduce the byproduct. This could mean creating a policy preventing work from being done in ways that put extension cords along walkways, for example. The idea is to change how work is done to maintain a safe environment.

3. Consider PPE or quarantine If it isn't possible to fix the hazard or reduce it, it's time to consider either sectioning off the area or supplying personal protective equipment (PPE). In areas that are hazardous but still need to be worked in, you need to limit the area to well-equipped employees. Place barriers preventing accidental entry and supply employees with equipment, like non-slip boots or harnesses, to reduce the likelihood of slips, trips, and falls.

Step 3: Changing Behavior

It can be hard to change people, that much should be evident in everyone's lives. Nonetheless, you don't want your employees to sustain debilitating injuries, so you want to get them to change their risky behavior. The best thing you can do is to train them on slips, trips, and falls and regularly remind them of those dangers in the workplace. By training them, they can understand the hazards and have more reason to correct their actions. Don't forget to reinforce the training by regularly reminding them about these dangers. Reminding them can come in the forms of placing posters throughout the worksite or holding regular safety talks.

The best way to prevent slip, trip, and fall accidents is through effective safety training, combined with safe work practices.