

OSHA Training Toolbox Talk: Fall Prevention – The Important Role of Footwear in Preventing Slips

[Reference 1910 Subpart D / 1926 Subpart M]

Slips can sneak up on you when you least expect it, sometimes resulting in a nasty bruise or broken bones suffered in a fall, or even non-fall related injuries such as a twisted knee or wretched back. And one commonly overlooked cause of slips at work is the improper selection, use, and care of footwear. However, OSHA safety regulations do not have a lot to say about the proper selection and use of footwear when it comes to preventing slips in the workplace, other than requiring appropriate waterproof footwear where wet processes are used. So, here are a few accident prevention tips related to the selection, use, and care of work shoes and boots:

- Make sure the footwear you wear has suitable soles designed for the type of surface and conditions you walk on at work. For example, rubber soles are more slip resistant than are leather soles, and soles with a gripped surface are more slip resistant than are soles that are flat and smooth.
- Check the soles of your shoes and boots to make sure they have not become worn out. Even the best slip-resistant soles available will wear down over time, resulting in less traction and slip-resistance over time.
- Also inspect your shoes and boots for any build-up of mud or any other foreign matter on the soles, and clean them when necessary. When materials are allowed to build up on the surface of your soles, they can cause you to slip, or at the least lessen the slip resistance that your soles afford you when they are clean.
- Loose soles on your shoes or boots can also be a safety hazard. This condition occurs when the stitching that holds the sole to your shoe or boot becomes loose or breaks. As a result, you may put your foot down to stop, but your foot continues to move a little because the sole and body of the shoe slightly separate, and that can cause you to slip.
- Last but not least, always consider the adequacy of your regular shoes or boots when you perform any non-routine task where you might be exposed to a different type of floor surface, or where there are different types of materials present on the floor. You could even include these considerations if and when you perform a Job Safety Analysis, or JSA, for the tasks you will be performing each day.

As you can see, something we often take for granted, like the selection and condition of our work shoes and boots, plays a small but important role in preventing injuries associated with slips and resulting falls. Does anyone have anything related to this topic that they want to share with the group? Thank you for your participation today. Please make certain you sign your name on the training certification form so you get credit for attending today's toolbox training session.

