Managing the risk
of slips, trips and falls

You don't have to be high off the ground for a fall to cause significant injury or death. Falls can occur in many different ways including through slips and trips, or falls from height, at level, or into holes or voids.

Slips, trips and falls result in tens of thousands of injuries every year in Australian workplaces.

Since 2003, 30 Australian workers have lost their lives through falls at level.

While many more workers lost their lives through falls from height (defined as over two metres), falls at level remain a very significant workplace risk that must be managed.

Slips occur when a person's foot loses traction with the ground surface.

Trips occur when a person unexpectedly catches their foot on an object or surface.

Falls can occur from any height.

Common causes of slips, trips and falls include:

- Wet or uneven flooring
- Poorly lit areas, especially staircases
- Unsuitable footwear
- Loose mats
- Open drawers
- Uncovered electrical cables
- Clutter and untidy workplaces

Common injuries include:

- Soft tissue injuries such as sprains and strains
- Back and spinal disc injuries
- Fractures and dislocations
- Cuts, abrasions and bruises.

Work health and safety duties

As a person conducting a business or undertaking, you must eliminate the risks of slips, trips and falls, so far as is reasonably practicable.

If you can't eliminate the risks, you must minimise them so far as is reasonably practicable.

The best way to manage the risks of slips, trips and falls is by designing safe workplaces.

In designing safe workplaces you should ensure:

- floors are level and have slip-resistant coverings
- sufficient power points are installed and appropriately located to avoid the need for trailing electrical cords
- all areas are well lit, particularly stairwells
- there is good drainage and slip resistant grates
- there is sufficient storage so things aren't left in walkways.

Common ways to minimise the risk of slips, trips and falls include:

- ensuring the workplace is clean by establishing regular cleaning schedules and removing rubbish promptly
- establishing procedures for reporting and cleaning spills
- cordoning off wet floor areas while cleaning is in progress
- ensuring floors are dried immediately after cleaning
- using signs to warn of wet or slippery floors and surfaces
- providing adequate rubbish and recycling bins
- keeping access ways clear by returning tools and other items to their storage areas after use
- providing non-slip mats
- ensuring there are no cords on walkways or work area floors
- ensuring workers wear non-slip footwear.