



# Aon West E-Mail Newsletter

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## SLIP, TRIP & FALL PREVENTION FALL, 2011



Did you  
know?



### Introduction:

- According to the National Safety Council, falls account for almost 12,000 deaths annually, making them the second leading cause of accidental death after auto accidents.
- They are the leading type of accident occurring in nursing homes and other long-term healthcare facilities.
- Injuries sustained in slip and fall accidents can be very serious, requiring a long time for recovery or leading to the onset of debilitating, or even life-threatening, complications.
- Prevention of slips and falls in the long-term care environment must be viewed as an indicator of quality care.
- In addition to possible liability, insurance claims and litigation, such accidents may be perceived as an indicator of “less than optimal care” and may adversely impact the reputation of the care facility.
- A comprehensive slip and fall prevention program can help to both decrease the likelihood and reduce the ultimate cost of these accidents.

### RISK FACTORS:

#### PHYSICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS:

- A facility has greater control over the physical environment than it does over variable human risk factors such as mental alertness, mobility, medication, and continence levels among its residents.
- More than 50% of all slip and fall accidents are caused by physical conditions and environmental factors.
- These risk factors include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - Surface composition.
  - Foreign substance potential (i.e. inherently slippery surfaces such as marble, items such as water and grease, etc.)
  - Surface condition (i.e. broken tiles, loose/torn carpeting, etc.)
  - Level changes (i.e. non-uniform steps or ramps with excessive slopes).
  - Obstructions (i.e. extension cords, floor displays, etc.)
  - Visibility.
  - Stairs.



### **AGE-RELATED RISK FACTORS:**

- Among an elderly population, several age-related human risk factors may cause or precipitate a fall.
- Many of these conditions can restrict residents' alertness, mobility, and range of motion, as well as performing activities of daily living.
- These conditions and ailments include:
  - Reduced vision acuity.
  - Slowed darkness adaptation.
  - Reduced depth perception and color contrast sensitivity.
  - Foot disorders.
  - Lower extremity weakness and balance deficit.
  - Cervical degenerative disorders.
  - Loss of hearing.
  - Incontinence.
  - Circulatory and blood pressure problems.
  - Mental disorders such as dementia, depression, and Alzheimer's disease.

### **RESIDENT MEDICATION:**

- Age-related risk factors are likely to affect the majority of the elderly resident population, the medication-related risk factors will affect each resident individually.
- The possibility of physical side effects, as well as the impact of prescription medications on the residents' alertness, responsiveness and judgment must be considered.
- Some residents may require multiple medications; the possibility of adverse reactions must be monitored.
- Some of the medications have undesirable side effects that may increase the risk of fall accidents.

### **THE FALL PREVENTION PLAN:**

- Although not all slip and fall accidents are preventable, a well-designed, comprehensive fall prevention plan can certainly help reduce the frequency and severity of slip and fall accidents of residents and visitors to long-term care facilities.
- The benefits of preventing slips and falls are far-reaching and can result in significant savings and improved care for residents.
- Prompt control of spills and foreign material.
- Appropriate floor care, including coating.
- Regular inspection of floor conditions and prompt maintenance.
- Avoiding obstructions in walkways, including extension cords.
- Do not over wax the floors.
- Skid-proof bath tubs, showers and bathroom floors.
- Adequate lighting in resident rooms for improved night time visibility.