SKILLSIGNAL™
Construction Safety & Compliance

TOOLBOX TALK

Preventing Slips: Your Brain Already Decided How Much Grip You Have

TOPIC NO.	DURATION	AUDIENCE
FP-02	**10 to 15 min**	**All Crew**

OSHA REFERENCE 29 CFR 1910.22 · 29 CFR 1926.25 · 29 CFR 1926.1052(c)

PROJECT / JOBSITE	DATE	PRESENTED BY

01 THE HOOK

START HERE

Think about how you walk across a carpet versus how you walk across a wet tile floor. You never decided to change your stride. Your brain did it for you, based on what it expected the floor to feel like. That is the whole problem. A slip is what happens when the floor delivers less grip than your brain already budgeted for. Mud on a dry plywood deck. A puddle at the bottom of a ramp. A film of dust on a polished slab. By the time your foot tells your brain it was wrong, you are already going down.

02 WHAT A SLIP ACTUALLY IS

Friction between your sole and the floor is what keeps your foot where you put it. Walking is a series of controlled catches: every step, your heel lands and friction stops it from sliding forward. When there is a **sudden, unexpected drop in friction**, the heel keeps going, your weight is already committed, and you fall backward or sideways with nothing to stop you. Slips produce some of the worst same-level injuries on a jobsite: **broken wrists, tailbones, hips, and head strikes** on concrete.

OSHA treats this as a housekeeping and walking-surface problem, not a footwear problem. **29 CFR 1910.22(a)** requires walking-working surfaces to be kept **clean, orderly, and dry** and free of hazards

like **spills, snow, and ice**. **29 CFR 1926.25** puts the same duty on construction: debris and scrap kept clear from work areas, passageways, and stairs. If the floor is slick, that is a violation, not bad luck.

03 WHERE THE FRICTION DISAPPEARS

⚡ LIQUIDS
Water, hydraulic fluid, cutting oil, coffee, form release agent. Even a thin film on a smooth surface cuts friction in half.

⚡ DUST AND POWDER
Drywall dust, concrete fines, sand on a slab. Dry powder rolls under your sole like ball bearings.

⚡ MUD TRACKED IN
Wet mud on boots carried onto plywood, steel decking, or finished floor. The hazard moves with you.

⚡ SURFACE TRANSITIONS
Gravel to concrete. Concrete to steel plate. Carpet to tile. Your brain adjusts late at every change.

⚡ ICE AND FROST
Early morning scaffold planks, steel decking, ramp surfaces. Frost is invisible on a gray surface before sunrise.

⚡ LOOSE MATS AND RUGS
A mat with worn backing slides out from under you. It is supposed to be the fix, not the hazard.

⚡ STAIRS AND RAMPS
Every slip on an incline becomes a fall to a lower level. Wet stair treads and muddy ramp cleats are the worst combination.

⚡ SMOOTH STEEL AND PLASTIC
Deck plate, poly sheeting, Visqueen on a slab. Smooth plus wet is the lowest friction on the site.

04 SIX HABITS THAT STOP SLIPS

HABIT 1

SEE IT, OWN IT
Spilled liquid, powder, or mud on a walkway is **your problem the moment you see it**. Clean it up, or block it off and get the right person. Walking past it means the next guy owns it with his hip.

HABIT 2

WIPE YOUR FEET AT TRANSITIONS
Mats and scraper grates at doorways and at the base of ramps are there to strip water and mud off your soles. **Use them every time.** The slip happens ten steps later on the clean floor, not in the mud.

HABIT 3

SLOW DOWN AT SURFACE CHANGES

Where the surface changes from one material to another, shorten your stride and put your foot down flat. Give your brain a half second to recalibrate.

HABIT 4

ONE HAND ON THE HANDRAIL

Under **29 CFR 1926.1052(c)**, any stairway with **four or more risers, or rising more than 30 inches**, must have a handrail. It only works if you hold it. A slip with a hand on the rail is a stumble. Without it, it is a fall down a flight of stairs.

HABIT 5

REPORT THE SLIDING MAT

A mat or rug that moves when you step on it has lost its non-skid backing. Report it and pull it. A loose mat on a wet floor is two hazards stacked on top of each other.

HABIT 6

WEAR THE SOLE THE JOB CALLS FOR

If the site rule says slip-resistant soles in a wet area, that is not a suggestion. We cover footwear in its own talk (FP-04). For today: **look at your soles before your shift**.

⚠ DON’T “WALK CAREFUL” THROUGH A SPILL

Nobody walks carefully enough to beat physics. If a walkway is wet, oily, or dusty, the fix is to clean it, cover it with something that grips, or close it. Telling the crew to watch their step is not a control. It is a hope.

05 WHY IT MATTERS

[JOBSITE]

FOR THE CREW

Same-level falls take construction workers off the job at a rate of 10 per 10,000 every year. One slip in a stairwell can cost a crew its best finisher for three months. Clean floors are faster floors.

[INDIVIDUAL]

FOR YOU

A slip on concrete breaks the wrist you catch yourself with, or the hip you land on. Both heal slowly. The five seconds it takes to grab a mop or a bag of sand is the cheapest insurance you will ever buy.

[HOME]

FOR LIFE OFF-SITE

Bathroom floors, garage slabs, icy front steps. Falls are the leading cause of injury deaths for Americans over 65. The habits that keep you upright at work keep your parents upright at home.

06 TODAY'S DRILL

TODAY'S DRILL **FIND THE FRICTION TRAP**

Walk your work area and find one spot where the surface changes or where something has been tracked onto the floor. Mud at the base of a ramp, dust on the stair landing, a slick patch under a leaking hose. Fix it or flag it before you start work, and tell the foreman what you found. If the fix is a mat, make sure the mat does not slide.

07 CREW DISCUSSION

Take 2 minutes. Pick one.

1. Where does water, mud, or dust collect on this site every single day? Who is responsible for it, and when was the last time it was cleaned before somebody slipped?

2. Have you ever slipped at a surface transition (gravel to slab, slab to steel)? What did your body do, and what would have made it worse?

3. What stairs on this site do you climb without touching the handrail? Why?

08 ATTENDANCE & SIGN-OFF

All attendees confirm they participated in this Toolbox Talk and understand the content covered.

NAME (PRINT)	SIGNATURE

SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE

_____ Date: _____

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