SKILLSIGNAL™
Construction Safety & Compliance

TOOLBOX TALK

Footwear and Slips: The Only PPE You Wear Out Without Noticing

TOPIC NO.	DURATION	AUDIENCE
FP-04	10 to 15 min	All Crew

OSHA REFERENCE 29 CFR 1926.96 · 29 CFR 1910.136 · 29 CFR 1910.141(a)(3) · ASTM F2413 / F2913

PROJECT / JOBSITE	DATE	PRESENTED BY

01 THE HOOK

START HERE

Flip your boot over. Right now, at the gang box. Look at the heel. Is the tread still there, or is it a smooth, rounded patch of rubber? Most guys have no idea, because nobody looks at the bottom of their own boots. Your boots are the only piece of PPE on your body that wears out a little bit every single shift and never tells you. A hard hat cracks. A harness frays where you can see it. A boot sole just quietly stops gripping, until the morning the deck is wet and your heel keeps going.

02 WHAT OSHA SAYS (AND DOESN'T)

OSHA's footwear rules are mostly about **impact and compression**, not slips. **29 CFR 1926.96** and **29 CFR 1910.136** require protective footwear where there is a danger of falling or rolling objects, objects piercing the sole, or electrical hazards. The construction rule points to the ANSI Z41 standard, now carried forward as **ASTM F2413** (the stamp inside the tongue of a safety-toe boot).

On slips, OSHA says less. **29 CFR 1910.141(a)(3)(ii)** requires that where **wet processes** are used, the employer provide drainage, dry standing places, or **appropriate waterproof footgear**. Beyond that, the duty falls under the general walking-working surface rules. That means the slip-resistance of your boot is mostly **your call and your employer's policy**, which is exactly why it gets ignored. The test

standard that matters is **ASTM F2913**, which measures a sole's coefficient of friction on wet and oily surfaces. If the box says "slip resistant" with no standard behind it, that is marketing.

03 FIVE THINGS TO CHECK ON YOUR BOOTS

CHECK 1

THE SOLE MATERIAL

Rubber grips. Leather and hard plastic slide. A soft rubber compound with a deep, open lug pattern sheds water and mud and bites into rough surfaces. A hard, smooth sole is fine on dry concrete and useless on wet steel. Match the sole to the worst surface on your site, not the best one.

CHECK 2

THE TREAD DEPTH

The best slip-resistant sole on the market wears down to nothing in a few months of hard use. When the lugs under the ball of your foot and the heel are **worn flat or rounded**, the boot has lost most of its grip. Replace it. A worn boot is a bald tire.

CHECK 3

WHAT IS PACKED IN THE TREAD

Mud, clay, concrete, and drywall compound pack into the lugs and turn a gripping sole into a smooth one. **Clean the tread** at the scraper grate before you walk onto plywood, decking, or finished floor. The slip happens where the floor is clean.

CHECK 4

A SOLE THAT IS SEPARATING

When the stitching or the glue between the sole and the upper lets go, your foot stops but the sole does not. That half-inch of slop is enough to put you down on a stair tread. **Separating sole: tape does not fix it. Replace it.**

CHECK 5

THE RIGHT BOOT FOR TODAY'S TASK

Your everyday boot might not be the boot for a wet slab pour, a steel deck in January, or a washdown. When the task or the surface changes, ask whether the footwear should too. Put it in the JHA. **Hard hats change by task. So should boots.**

04 GOOD BOOT, BAD BOOT

✓ READY FOR THE DECK	✗ READY TO PUT YOU DOWN
SOLE **Soft rubber, deep open lugs, ASTM F2913 slip rating on the label**	SOLE **Hard, smooth, or shallow tread; “comfort” sole; no slip test standard listed**
HEEL Defined heel edge, full tread, no rounding	HEEL Worn round and smooth, rubber shiny under the heel
TREAD Clean, mud and concrete scraped out before walking inside	TREAD Packed solid with mud, clay, or compound
CONSTRUCTION Sole fully bonded, stitching tight, no gaps at the toe or heel	CONSTRUCTION Sole lifting at the toe, stitching broken, taped or glued in the field
FIT Laced snug, ankle supported, heel locked in	FIT Loose laces, heel sliding inside the boot, worn to a slipper

⚠ **SAFETY TOE DOES NOT MEAN SLIP RESISTANT**

A steel or composite toe protects you from a dropped block. It says nothing about the sole. Plenty of ASTM F2413 safety-toe boots have hard, smooth soles that are dangerous on wet surfaces. Read both ratings. The toe stamp is inside the tongue. The slip rating is on the box or the manufacturer’s spec sheet.

05 WHY IT MATTERS

[JOBSITE]

FOR THE CREW

Boots are the one control every single person on the crew brings to the gate. If the site rule says slip-resistant soles in wet areas, inspect for it at the morning huddle. It takes ten seconds per person and it is the cheapest slip control on the job.

[INDIVIDUAL]

FOR YOU

A slip on wet steel breaks the wrist you throw out to catch yourself. A $150 pair of boots with real tread is cheaper than one deductible. Look at your heels tonight. If they are round and shiny, buy new boots this week.

[HOME]

FOR LIFE OFF-SITE

The same boots go home. Icy driveways, wet garage floors, a ladder in the yard. Worn soles do not know the difference between work and Saturday.

06 TODAY'S DRILL

TODAY'S DRILL **BOOT CHECK AT THE GANG BOX**

Everybody flips one boot over right now. Look at three things: tread depth at the heel and ball, anything packed in the lugs, and whether the sole is separating anywhere. Anyone with a bald heel or a separating sole tells the foreman before the end of the day. Then find the scraper grate nearest your work area and actually use it before you walk inside.

07 CREW DISCUSSION

Take 2 minutes. Pick one.

1. How old are the boots you have on, and when did you last look at the bottom of them?
2. What is the slickest surface on this site, and would the boot you are wearing right now hold on it wet?
3. Does anyone here have a boot the site should ban? 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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