

Slips and Falls: Creating a Safe Working Environment

By Mike Rosenau, MBA, CSP, ARM

Risk Control Manager, Society Insurance

It's a busy Sunday morning at peak shopping time. Customers fill the store and navigate the now-narrow aisles. The last thing you want to hear is an employee's report of how a customer slipped in spilled orange juice and is now injured.

Slips and falls are a leading source of customer injury and the second-leading cause of employee injury. At businesses nationwide, every eight seconds someone will slip and fall. Injuries from slips and falls can result in costly claims, downtime and a poor safety reputation.

Grocery stores are rife with slip and fall dangers, especially in larger stores where consistent monitoring can be difficult. While it isn't possible to completely eliminate threats, there are measures you can take to safeguard your customers, your employees and your store's reputation.

Prevent slips and falls

The nature of the grocery store business provides plenty of opportunities for slip and fall accidents to occur. Entryways with inadequate rug coverage, water on the floors of the produce department, and recently mopped bathroom floors all pose threats. But you can take control of the situation and minimize the potential for slips and falls within your store:

1. Identify the problem

Look to your past incident reports or history to see if you can track and trend your incidents. This will help you to identify problem areas; e.g. specific departments, outside, entrances, bathrooms, etc., and help you to create a plan of action to minimize risks.

2. Control the environment

Walk-off mats at store entrances are helpful in capturing debris and absorbing water before customers enter the store. However, to ensure



mats don't become a hazard, make sure they are properly maintained. Regularly dry mats and go over them with an extractor to remove excess water. Flatten out curled up edges or replace worn-out mats. Consider adding mats to the produce area where moisture may be present.

3. Display safety signs

Make sure any slip, trip or fall threats are clearly marked.

Use wet floor signs only when the floor is actually wet—you run the risk of having these signs ignored if they are out on a daily basis. Warn customers of areas where they will need to step up or down. Make sure steps and stairs are well lit.

4. Clean floors on regular basis

Your store should have a regular pattern of cleaning activities such as removal of debris or foreign objects from the floor (especially in the produce area), sweeping the floors and mopping.

While mopping is important to keep the floors clean, it should be done at non-peak times during low-visitor traffic. Only spot-mop when necessary and use appropriate signage.

Develop a sweep log identifying the timing for employees to walk all the aisles to look for slip, trip, and fall hazards. For example, each department should inspect their aisles every 15 to 30 minutes, which establishes a pattern of proactive hazard identification.

Take these simple preventative measures to help you avoid potential lawsuits and downtime due to slips and falls in your store. Proactively identifying and minimizing threats will go a long way in creating a safer shopping and working environment.

To learn how taking care of the small details can mean a big difference in protecting your business, visit [societyinsurance.com](https://www.societyinsurance.com).