



Ontario Safety Association  
for Community & Healthcare

# Slips and Falls



A Guide to  
Implementing a Workplace  
Prevention Program

Copyright 2006, Ontario Safety Association for Community & Healthcare, all rights reserved. Please note that this document and the information contained herein is for the purpose of providing readers with general information only that may not be applicable to specific situations. In every case, readers should seek specific advice from qualified individuals regarding appropriate health and safety techniques. Under no circumstances shall Ontario Safety Association for Community & Healthcare (OSACH) be held responsible for any damage or other losses resulting from reliance upon the general information herein contained, and all such liabilities are specifically disclaimed to the full extent permitted by law.

All digital and analogue content available from OSACH, including, but not limited to, published and unpublished text, graphics, user and visual interfaces, videos, films, logos, images, audio clips, computer code, data compilations, and software, and the compilation and design thereof in any media format including OSACH's Website (the "Content") is the property of OSACH and is protected by Canadian and applicable foreign copyright laws and international conventions.

All registered and unregistered trade-marks, design marks and/or service marks (the "Trade-marks") displayed on OSACH's Website and in all of the Content are the property of OSACH in Canada and elsewhere and are protected by Canadian and applicable foreign trademark laws and international conventions. All other Trade-marks not owned by OSACH that appear in the Content and/or Website are the property of their respective owners, who may or may not be affiliated with, connected to, or sponsored by OSACH.

Neither the Content, the Trade-marks, nor any portion of OSACH's Website may be used, reproduced, posted, uploaded, distributed, translated, sold, resold, modified, or otherwise exploited, in full or in part, for any purpose without OSACH's prior written consent.

## Preface

### **Slips and Falls in Community and Health Care Organizations**

Slips and falls are among the leading causes of injury in the community and health care work environments. The costs of these injuries to staff, clients, organizations and the health care system as a whole are substantial and have long-term financial and operational impacts.

The starting point for any slip and fall prevention program is a positive attitude that slip and fall incidents can be prevented.

This document is intended as a guide to help organizations identify, assess and control slip and fall hazards throughout the workplace. The emphasis is on integrating slip and fall prevention into the overall health and safety program and ensuring compliance with applicable health and safety legislation.

*The Ontario Safety Association for Community & Healthcare (OSACH), formerly known as the Health Care Health and Safety Association of Ontario (HCHSA), is a not-for-profit organization, designated as a Safe Workplace Association under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act (SO 1997). Our vision is to inspire, guide and support our clients to achieve the healthiest and safest workplaces.*

*Joseline Sikorski, CHE  
President & CEO  
OSACH*

## Acknowledgements

This document was developed by the Ontario Safety Association for Community & Healthcare (OSACH), specifically by Hillarie Klass, Consultant, with leadership provided by Joseline Sikorski, President & CEO, and the support and assistance of Consultants Janet Avery and Heinrich Beukes.

OSACH also gratefully acknowledges the following organizations across the province that generously committed time and resources to reviewing this document. Their participation does not imply an endorsement of the document:

Avenue 11, Thunder Bay  
Brain Injury Services, Thunder Bay  
Brantwood Residential, Brantford  
Community Living, Toronto  
Elm Grove Living Centre, Toronto  
Extendicare, Oshawa  
Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto  
MICS Group of Health Services, Iroquois Falls  
Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, Toronto  
Ontario Long Term Care Association, Markham  
Ontario Ministry of Labour, Toronto  
Ontario Nurses' Association, Toronto  
Ontario Public Service Employees Union, Toronto  
St. Joseph's Health Centre, Toronto  
St. Patrick's Home of Ottawa, Ottawa  
Second Harvest, Toronto  
Sudbury Developmental Services, Sudbury  
Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, Toronto

# Table of Contents

Preface	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Table of Contents	iii
Introduction	1
I. Understanding Legislative Requirements	2
II. Program Development	4
1.0 Securing Senior Management Commitment and Employee Involvement	5
1.1 Management Commitment and Employee Involvement	6
2.0 Assessing Needs and Selecting Appropriate Controls	7
2.1 Recognize existing and potential hazards that contribute to slips and falls	8
2.2 Assess and prioritize the level of risk	10
2.3 Selection of Controls	11
2.3.1 Flooring Types	12
2.3.2 Slip Resistance	13
2.3.3 Floor Cleaning	14
2.3.4.1 Visual – Depth Perception	15
2.3.4.2 Visual – Lighting	16
2.3.5 Footwear	17
2.3.6 Ramps and Steps	18
2.3.7.1 Worksite-specific – Client Care	19
2.3.7.2 Worksite-specific – Shower and Bathrooms	20
2.3.7.3 Worksite-specific – Community	21
2.3.7.4 Worksite-specific – Dietary and Laundry: Control slip and fall hazards in dietary and laundry areas	22
2.3.7.5 Worksite-specific – Offices	23
2.3.7.6 Worksite-specific - Building exterior	24
2.3.8.1 General Measures (1)	25
2.3.8.2 General Measures (2): Entrances and walkways	26
2.3.8.3 General Measures (3): Spill prevention	27
2.3.8.4 General Measures (4): Walkway obstructions	28
2.3.9 Preventive Maintenance	29
2.3.10 Ladders: Condition, use and storage	30
2.3.11.1 Scaffolds (1): Set up and maintenance	31
2.3.12.2 Scaffolds (2): Fall-arrest system	32
3.0 Developing the Program Components	33
3.1 Develop a formal Slips and Falls Prevention Policy	34
3.2 Develop written procedures	35
4.0 Implementing the Program	36
4.1 Market and communicate the program to the organization	37
4.2 Put a process in place to educate employees	38
5.0 Evaluating the Program	39
5.1 Evaluate controls to ensure they are effective and practised	40
5.2 Evaluate the goals and objectives	41

Appendix A – Abbreviations, Acronyms and Glossary	42
Abbreviations and Acronyms	42
Glossary	43
Appendix B – Slip and Fall Prevention Inspection Checklist	44
Appendix C – Slips and Falls Workplace Analysis Tool	48
Appendix D – OSACH Slip and Fall Risk Matrix	50
Appendix E – Slips and Falls: A Technical Evaluation Guide	53
Appendix F – Recommended Flooring Chart	55
Appendix G – Sample Footwear Policy	57
Appendix H – Sample Ladder Inspection Checklist	58
Appendix I – Guidelines for a Slip and Fall Prevention Program Policy	59
Appendix J – Slip and Fall Program Evaluation Form	60
References	61

## Introduction

*OSACH Slips and Falls: A Guide to Implementing a Workplace Prevention Program* is designed to assist our member organizations in understanding more about the types of slip and fall hazards and provide information on the steps to consider when developing and implementing a slip and fall prevention program.

### What is the focus?

OSACH would like you to be more aware of hazards that can contribute to or cause slip and fall incidents/accidents. Accidents from slips and falls can cause serious injury and result in significant disability and Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) related costs. Worldwide, falls are the third leading cause of disability after depression and anemia, and the second leading cause of accidental death, after motor vehicle collisions (Courtney, Chang, Grönqvist et al., 2001). Same-level falls account for between 20 and 40 per cent of disabling occupational injuries in developed countries (Courtney, Sorock, Manning et al. 2001). In Ontario, WSIB data indicate that slips and falls are the second highest reported injury after musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) in the community and health care sector. Of these slip and fall injuries, 83 per cent occurred from same level falls and 17 per cent from were falls from ladders.

Slips result from a loss of balance caused by too little friction between the footwear and the working surface. Falls can occur from slips, but also from other causes such as trips (collision of the foot with an object), at ground level or at a height (e.g., on a ladder or stepstool). A recent study of slips, trips and falls among health care workers revealed that the majority of accidents were a result of slipping and approximately one third were due to tripping. Liquid contaminants were responsible for 36 per cent of the events, and the majority of events occurred at an area of surface transition—a change of level or flooring material. This study underlines the importance of managing surface contamination and surface transitions (Courtney, Lombardi, Sorock et al., 2006).

Effective strategies to reduce and remove slip and fall hazards in the workplace require a system of continuous improvement and integration along with an efficient approach to cost containment. This guidebook will provide you with a step-by-step approach to developing a slips and falls prevention program. We encourage you to use a multidisciplinary committee approach to program development involving representation from appropriate departments, managers, front-line staff and your joint health and safety committee (JHSC) and/or health and safety representative (HSR). Appendix A contains a list of abbreviations and acronyms and a glossary of terms used in this document.

### **DVD/Video – *Slips and Falls: More than a trivial affair***

OSACH also offers this excellent, 11-minute video on this topic. This video illustrates the most frequent causes of slips and falls in health care facilities and illustrates some common sense approaches to prevention.