

Risk Alert



Listening. Learning. Leading.®

Recognizing the importance of slips and falls on steps and stairs

Slips and falls on steps and stairs present the greatest risk of a fatal injury at worship centers. An analysis of slip-and-fall losses reported to Church Mutual revealed that more fatalities occur on interior steps than any other area in a worship center. The majority of these falls, 90 percent, occur while descending steps and stairs.

The Consumer Products Safety Commission also reports falls on steps and stairs account for more deaths than any other slip-and-fall category.



Physical layout plays a critical point in preventing slips and falls

Serious stair injuries can be prevented. Do not wait for a fall to put a plan in place. Inspect your steps and stairs today and take action to prevent a slip and fall by your employees, members and guests.

- All steps should have adequate height and tread widths. Steps with differing rise and pitch should be reconstructed to be identical throughout the whole stair.
- Always keep steps and stairs clear of obstacles. Cartons, boxes or other items should never be stored on steps and stairs.
- Maintain clean steps and stairs. Immediately clean snow, ice, water and any other spills that could cause slips and trips. Display caution wet floor signs when appropriate.
- Keep landings, stairs and steps well lit. Replace, repair or clean lights before luminous levels become too low. Installing light switches at the top and bottom of stairs eliminates the need to step in the dark. Poor lighting can obscure slip-and-trip hazards while excessively bright or incorrectly placed lights can cause glare, shadows or violent contrasts between step risers.
- Ensure handrails are sturdy, secure and extend to the bottom step. Where people are likely to be ascending and descending the stair at the same time, it is essential to have a handrail on both sides of the steps. Provide handrails at a useable level for children and adults.
- Accent steps with visible edges of contrasting color or brightness. Anti-slip coatings or nonslip safety treads should be fitted as close as possible to the leading edge of the tread. If carpet is used as a stair covering, it should be securely fitted and maintained to remain so. Worn or damaged carpet should be replaced immediately.

(Over)

Philosophy is just as important to prevent a slip

- Put in place measures for traffic streaming and flow management that include ascending and descending stairs. Determine your high-traffic periods, typically before and after services. Ensure a staggered release of congregants onto heavily used traffic routes. This helps decrease the chances of feeling rushed and misjudging a step.
- Encourage users to always keep one hand free to be able to use the handrail.
- Deter tasks that obstruct a person's view of the next step, such as carrying large items. Instead carry smaller, lighter loads and make extra trips. Use a hand truck or hand cart for any large or heavy items.

For a complete collection of the *Risk Alert* series, visit our Web site and look in the Safety Resources section.