

Advice from the WCIA

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Oh No - A Slip and Fall Injury!

Definition of a "Slip and Fall Injury":

A 'slip and fall' or 'trip and fall' is a broad insurance term for injury that occurs when an individual slips, trips or falls as a result of a dangerous or hazardous condition on someone else's property. This can occur due to water, snow or ice, or from other factors such as abrupt changes in flooring, poor lighting or a hidden hazard, like a gap or a hard to see hole in the ground.

Did you know?

Falls are second only to automobile accidents in causing personal injury. Falls result in almost two million injuries a year, and there are over a thousand fatal industrial falls each year.

What can I do at my car wash to prevent customer "slips and falls"?

- Take the time to identify, control and eliminate the hazards around your car wash to lower the chances of slips and falls.
- Walk the path that your customers most often take when utilizing your services and look for tripping hazards such as uneven pavement.
- Make sure that all of your walking surfaces are free of loose rocks, uneven floors and broken sidewalks.
- Be sure to keep the lobby area clear of clutter and inventory boxes, and mark any areas of the floor that recently had a spill, been mopped or cleaned with water. Be careful not to over wax or polish your lobby floor.
- Secure or avoid throw rugs, especially those on wood or tile floors, or those that curl up on the ends causing a tripping hazard.
- Do not run any electrical cords over walk areas.
- Have a grab bar in the toilet area to assist customers.
- Make sure that all customer seating areas are safe, level and secure, reducing the likelihood of an incident.
- Keep young children and pets supervised at all times since obvious dangers are not always apparent to them. Don't let children climb on your tables or jump off stools and benches.
- Make sure that you and your car wash staff are always looking out for the customer by keeping a keen eye on them as they use your services, especially when in the drive-in and drive-off area.
- Don't forget about being **ADA compliant**.

What can I do at my car wash to prevent employee “slips and falls”?

- Make sure that your employees have the proper clothing and shoes to provide your car wash services.
- Soles and heels of shoes should provide good traction and be slip resistant.
- Individuals working in the prep area (working in water) must have waterproof boots and OSHA-required attire.
- Make sure that your employees walk and don't run while working at the car wash. It's common for a thin layer of water to exist between the sole of the shoes and the pavement, much like a hydroplaning situation with car tires.
- Employees must remain focused on their work and free of distractions.
- Keep your equipment and chemical rooms clean and free of tripping hazards. Only allow specific individuals to be in these rooms.
- Walk the path that your employees most often use to provide services to your customer and keep the area free of tripping hazards, such as uneven pavement, hoses, etc.
- Clean up oily, greasy or muddy pavement immediately.
- Never allow the use of a “make-shift” ladder in place of a real ladder when trying to wash or dry hard-to-reach areas on a vehicle. Prevent the use of the customer's truck tire as a stepstool.
- Provide proper lighting throughout the car wash, including the lobby and employee break room.
- It's imperative that all employees are aware of moving vehicles at all times, not just the ones in the drive-on and drive-off areas. A slip or fall involving a moving vehicle could end up being an ugly claim for any car wash.

Although most of you have liability and worker's compensation insurance (it's the law) for customer and employee “slip and fall” injuries, there can also be an additional cost to you through a premium increase due to a paid claim.

As a prior full-service car wash owner, I have always felt that it's better to be proactive than reactive. Besides the “slip and fall” hazards, it's in your interest to take the time to walk around and look at your facility to locate hazards of **all** types.

Stay ahead of the curve - it's always your best bet.