

Risk Control Bulletin

Addressing the Trip and Fall Hazard

RISK CONTROL



The act of walking and the rhythmic flexion and extension of the legs can be interrupted when a person's foot comes into contact with an obstacle, at or near the ground, which can stop that rhythmic motion and cause a person to trip. When this happens, the body's center of gravity rapidly moves out of the area of the body's support base (the planted foot), and the person can fall. Falls are serious at any age, and breaking a bone after a fall becomes more likely as a person ages.

Most state, local and federal codes and standards describe changes in surface heights, 1/4 to 3/8 inches or more, as trip hazards. Changes in surface heights need to be identified through a thorough facility inspection and deficiencies need to be promptly corrected in order to minimize the potential for trip and fall injuries.

Exterior walking surfaces are just as important as interior walking surfaces, especially in view of recently adopted legislation in some communities where building owners are being held responsible for sidewalk conditions that have prompted lawsuits.

Choose responsible individuals to perform site inspections to identify and arrange for the correction of the following:

- Excessive surface height changes greater than 1/4 to 3/8 inches .
- Large gaps exceeding 1/4 to 3/8 inches between slabs of concrete, concrete and curbs, between concrete and other walking materials, and between bricks, pavers, slate or any other walking materials.
- Weeds, tree roots or low lying branches creating tripping hazards or uplifting the surfaces.
- Holes in the surfaces resulting from spalling or mechanical damage.
- Other obstacles, such as damaged planters, fences or decorative materials

Make sure that inspection frequency is adequate to keep up with potential occurring deficiencies.