

The Secret to Reducing Slip-and-Fall Accidents Is Right Under Your Feet

By Heidi Shetler

Every year, slips, trips, and falls send five million people to the emergency room with sprains, strains, bruises, and breaks. Walking surface imperfections that contribute to slips and falls—like loose floorboards and torn carpeting—are easy to find. They are also easy to correct. The larger issue is making sure these problems are recorded so inadequate products or procedures can be identified and fixed before they result in an accident claim.

ONE GROCERY STORE'S SIMPLE SOLUTION

With hundreds of customers visiting each day, not to mention the employees bustling through the aisles, grocery stores have a lot of feet stepping on smooth floors. Someone might trip on a piece of produce, or an employee could lose their footing in water that leaked from a broken freezer—it's all just chalked up as the cost of doing business.

Indeed, the grocery industry spends about \$450 million annually to defend against slip-and-fall claims. And when an injury is severe enough, claims can end in multi-million dollar settlements that insurers often end up paying out.

One regional grocery store chain and its insurance broker decided they weren't going to settle for the slip-and-fall status quo. Redner's Markets, which operates 43 supermarkets and 13 convenience stores throughout its home state of Pennsylvania, as well as Delaware and Maryland, partnered with Philadelphia-based broker ECBM to develop a holistic safety program that has nearly eliminated slip-and-fall claims.

The solution is built around the Safety Walk program, which was developed in tandem by Redner's Director of Risk Management John Flickinger and ECBM broker Tony Kamnikar. The program is based on employees making hourly walks throughout the store, looking for spills, leaks, and anything that could be a hazard. During the walks, employees use barcode readers to make a record of checking or cleaning a specific area.

Additionally, through these walks, Redner's identified perhaps the biggest cause for slips, trips, and falls: rubber-backed rental rugs that were bunching up or shifting during use. But that all changed when Flickinger found the fix for their flooring problem at a national retail conference.

THE FLOOR MAT THAT STICKS

For a long time, rubber-backed rental mats have been the most common approach to floor safety, but they are based on outdated technology and often exacerbate fall hazards. That's why New Pig, a leading provider of workplace safety solutions, set out to create the next evolution in floor protection.

Specifically designed to eradicate same-level slips, trips, and falls, PIG Grippy Floor Mat was the world's first adhesive-backed mat solution on the market. Grippy Mat lays flat, sticks tight, and never bunches, ripples, or shifts like rubber-backed mats. It's also absorbent, extremely durable, and built to last up to three months before changeouts. Tested and certified by the National Floor Safety Institute (NFSI), Grippy Mat helps reduce slip-and-fall claims by as much as 90 percent when used

as part of a floor safety program like Redner's uses.

Redner's has deployed Grippy Mat throughout its stores in problem areas, such as entrances, salad bars, and frozen food aisles. It became the foundation of the company's safety strategy after Flickinger introduced it to Kamnikar, who saw it as a natural addition to the Safety Walk program. Kamnikar was so impressed, he now advocates for the mat to other clients.

GETTING A GRIP

The relationship between ECBM, Redner's, and New Pig resulted in a true success story and a model for insurer-client-supplier partnerships.

With the help of Grippy Mat, Redner's went from dealing with 15-to-20 claims for trips over carpets each year to nearly zero. The stores also passed a Pennsylvania safety audit with flying colors, and the auditor even recommended the chain apply for a state award.

It took a strong commitment from all parties, but in the end Redner's is safer for consumers and employees, and ECBM has a client that it knows it can rely on to do what's right.

Companies that continue to rely on obsolete mats that can cause more harm than good are leaving themselves at risk for large claims payouts. But a proactive and collaborative approach to safety, using simple-yet-effective products and procedures, makes all the difference.

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