

West Bend's statistical database indicates a significant percentage of all workers' compensation claims in the transportation sector were related to slips, trips, and falls (STFs). Historically, costs associated with STFs accounted for approximately 33 percent of transportation claim dollars, making these events even more costly than motor vehicle accidents or material handling. Although there can be several contributing factors to STFs, footwear is critical item to address when taking actions to reduce these events.

## Here are some best practices for footwear and footwear policies:

- Require work shoes or boots that:
  - Are closed toe and in good condition
  - Have anti-slip tread
  - Provide good ankle support
  - Are water-resistant or waterproof (especially when employees work in wet or cold conditions)
- Require safety toes for employees who conduct manual material handling, work with pallet jacks or fork trucks, or have the risk falling materials. Safety-toe, waterproof, slip-resistant footwear is available. Options for safety toes include:
  - Steel toe caps
  - Composite toe caps (Note: these may be more comfortable in winter as they don't conduct the cold. They're also often lighter and considered more comfortable.)
  - Slip-on "overshoe" covers that can be applied as needed.
- Require oil-resistant, anti-slip soles for employees who work in or enter the shop.
- Discourage or prohibit cowboy boots or any other footwear with leather soles, as they pose slip and trip hazards. (*Cowboy boot factoid: Typically, by design, cowboy boots have pointed toes to easily find the stirrups on a saddle and leather soles to allow the foot to disengage the stirrup in the event the rider wants to get off the horse quickly. However, the pointed toes and smooth/slippery soles increase the risk of falls while truckers are climbing in/out of cabs or trailers and on ladders.*)
- Prohibit bare feet, flip-flops, and rubber-molded clogs while driving or during work hours.

Because ensuring proper selection and use of footwear is so important, it's best practice to have a written policy that includes these elements. In addition, to incentivize replacement of footwear when needed, strong consideration should be given to a footwear allowance or reimbursement plan.

## Special Considerations During Winter

Snow and ice are the top cost drivers of STF injuries. Therefore, it's a best practice to provide and require attachable traction-wear, when employees are working in snow and/or ice. There are several driver-friendly styles that don't impair pedal use or climbing. Company expectations for attachable traction-wear should also be included in your policy.