



OSHA Warns Nursing Care Facilities to 'Watch Their Steps'

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Businesses look to reduce slip, trip, and fall accidents by contracting with commercial floor mat services.

WILMINGTON, Mass., Aug. 28, 2012 /PRNewswire via COMTEX/ --Working in a nursing home or residential care facility can be particularly hazardous to your health, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. OSHA says such employees miss work at a rate that is 2.3 times higher than all other private industry businesses combined, largely related to accidental slips, trips, and falls.

As a result, OSHA has made these healthcare facilities the target of a national emphasis program (NEP), which means it will now be inspecting such businesses, specifically, for safety violations over the next three years. It will also be keeping tabs on *all* types of businesses for slips, trips, and falls because data shows such accidents cause 15 percent of all accidental deaths in North America-- second only to car accidents.

"[Nursing home and residential care workers] have dedicated their lives to caring for our loved ones when they are not well. It is not acceptable that they continue to get hurt at such high rates," says Dr. David Michaels, Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA. "Our new emphasis program for inspecting these facilities will strengthen protections for society's caretakers."

"Since dirty and wet walking surfaces are often cited as causes of preventable accidents, safety minded businesses often include commercial 'floor mat systems' to help prevent slips and falls," says Adam Soreff, Director of Marketing for [UniFirst](#), a company that provides commercial floor mat and uniform services to companies throughout the U.S. and Canada.

The most effective floor mat systems, Soreff says, consist of placing scraper mats with raised rubber cleats outside entranceways to remove heavy dirt and moisture first, and then placing carpet-topped walk-off mats inside entrances to trap any residual dirt and moisture. In addition, placing walk-off mats in all heavy traffic areas inside helps contain soiling and moisture even further.

Special safety floor mats should also be included as part of floorcare systems. For instance, "wet area" mats that funnel spilled liquids beneath their surfaces are recommended near areas such as sinks and drinking fountains; and anti-fatigue mats, which can reduce muscle and joint fatigue, are helpful wherever employees stand for long periods of time.

UniFirst's Soreff adds, "When it comes to selecting mats for safety, it's imperative that businesses look for industrial-grade mats specifically constructed to lie flat and stay put. For this reason, we recommend mats certified as 'high traction' by the National Floor Safety Institute (NFSI)."

Even the highest quality floor mats must be professionally cleaned, maintained, and quality inspected on a regular basis to remain clean and fully functional, Soreff says. "Vacuuming alone won't do it, and neither will a scrub brush. You've got to get deep down into rubber crevices and fiber pillings to hygienically clean floor mats."

Soreff says he's often surprised that many facility managers are unaware that there are companies like UniFirst which can bundle commercial floor mat systems with other business services. "We remove all soiled floor mats on a regular basis and rotate them with professionally laundered and maintained ones. For busy managers this can provide a cost effective prescription for reducing slips, trips, and falls."

About UniFirst

UniFirst (NYSE: UNF) offers professional Facility Service programs to healthcare and other businesses throughout the U.S. and Canada. The [Company](#) is also a North American leader in the supply and servicing of uniforms, workwear, and protective clothing, outfitting more than 1.5 million workers each business day. For more information, contact UniFirst at 800-455-7654 or visit www.unifirst.com.

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