

According to the National Safety Council, approximately 35 percent of all nonfatal injuries are due to injuries sustained from a fall. Sidewalks are a common location for falls, often due to unsafe but correctable conditions, such as cracks and raised edges. Routine walkway inspections can help identify and prioritize defects for corrective action before more serious problems arise. Proactive inspection and repair of sidewalks, parking lots and other walkways reduces the risk of a slip, trip and fall incident and can extend their useful life.

Routine Sidewalk Inspections

Sidewalks and other walkways should be regularly inspected to help ensure that problems are discovered, documented and repaired as soon as possible. Inspections should be performed at least annually, but high-traffic areas near schools, business districts and other areas frequented by the general public should be audited at least every other month. Inspections can be easily performed by in-house personnel. Use the sidewalk safety checklist on the back of this tech sheet to assist in your sidewalk inspections, or use EMC's Walkway Check mobile app. It is important to retain inspection records in the event an injury occurs on the property. Items that should be documented during walkway inspections include:

- Vertical displacement greater than ½ inch (¼ inch if on a handicap accessible route)
- Cracks or gaps greater than ¾ inch wide and ½ inch deep
- Three or more cracks in a single sidewalk section
- 50 percent or more of a sidewalk section that has spalling or chipping ½ inch deep
- Divots or potholes greater than 3 inches in diameter and ½ inch deep
- Chunks of loose concrete or slabs that move or wobble
- Benches, signs or other objects that reduce usable width to less than 36 inches
- Hoses or cords routed across walkways



- Utility plugs, valves or other objects that protrude ½ inch or more above the walkway surface
- Unsecured utility covers or grates
- Tree limbs, bushes or other plants posing an obstruction
- Rocks, sand, dirt or other debris accumulating on the sidewalk
- Areas of ponding water ¼ inch deep or more. If conditions are dry, a layer of mud may indicate a ponding problem. Ponding may lead to black ice in cold weather or promote slick algae growth during warm weather.

In addition to inspecting sidewalks, it's also a good idea to inspect parking lots, alleys, patios, stairs and other areas of pedestrian travel for the same types of hazards stated above. All inspections should be documented with the name of the inspector, date of the inspection, areas inspected, any problems noted and a timeline for repairs.

Repair Guidelines

Various repair methods can extend the life of your sidewalks and make them safer for pedestrians. Consult your local jurisdiction for specific requirements and limitations. Some common repair methods include:

- **Grinding:** Removes raised edges (up to 1 inch) at control joints

- **Saw cutting:** Cuts rather than grinds raised edges up to 2-½ inches
- **Mud jacking:** Lifts and stabilizes settling concrete slabs
- **Vinyl or epoxy patch:** Patches divots, cracks and severe pitting or spalling

For Additional Information

Americans with Disabilities Act: www.ada.gov

EMC Insurance Companies: www.emcins.com

- Safety by Topic – Slips and Falls
- Mobile Apps – Walkway Check

Sidewalk Safety Checklist

Location Name: _____

Date of Inspection: _____

Location Address: _____

Inspector's Name: _____

The following exterior locations were inspected on the date shown above (check all that apply):

"NO" responses indicate areas that should be investigated	Yes	No
Are parking areas free of potholes, depressions or damaged/uneven surfacing?		
Are curbs in good condition with an even transition to sidewalk?		
Are wheel stops, curbs, crosswalks and speed bumps well marked?		
Is slip-resistant paint used for all pavement markings?		
Are wheel stops situated to prevent vehicles from obstructing walkways?		
Is there adequate lighting in parking areas and along walkways?		
Are sidewalks and walkways smooth and even (no raised edges >½ inch)?		
Is the ground surface directly next to sidewalks relatively level and free from hidden drop-offs or holes?		
Are walkways free of cords, hoses, large grate openings and other tripping hazards?		
Are open, unpaved and/or grassy walking areas free of holes and low lying objects like sprinkler heads and valves?		
Are downspouts and drains positioned to discharge away from walkways?		
Are walkways that are subject to wet or icy conditions coated or designed with a rough, textured finish?		
Are handrails present and in good condition on stairs and ramps?		
Are ramps constructed with slip-resistant materials or treated with traction strips?		