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**Avoid Slips and Falls
by Dr. E. M. Tarbash**

Property managers and owners who think that slips and falls at their properties is a non-issue should think twice. Lawsuits related to slip and fall accidents have risen by more than 300% since 1980 according to OSHA. The National Safety Council claims that slips and falls were responsible for 41,870 general industry accidents in 2003. That is an astronomical statistic. It is also costing property managers and owners a small fortune.

A classic example of such a claim is highlighted by Doe v. LaSalle Partners, N.J., Middlesex County Super. Ct. Doe, 29, was leaving her office building through the main lobby when she slipped and fell on the lobby floor. Apparently the snowstorm from days past had left water, salt, and sand on the lobby floor. Doe suffered a herniated disk which required a microdiscectomy. Her medical expenses totaled about \$35,000.

Doe sued the building owner and maintenance company, claiming they had not: 1) cleaned the floor properly from the lingering water and debris, 2) placed a **entrance floor mat down to provide traction or 3) posted a sign warning of conditions. Although the Defendants pleaded that the Plaintiff had not been watching where she was going, the parties settled the case for \$485,000 plus the satisfaction of a \$115,000 workers' compensation lien.**

The National Safety Council estimates medical costs and compensation for cases like this at \$70 billion a year. Anything that can be done to show proper maintenance by the building owner and manager is a plus should ever an accident occurs.

Clearly, a property owner or manager is not liable simply because a person slips and falls on the property. The Plaintiff must prove that management was negligent and in some capacity, was at fault. Management can be at fault if they knew or should have known about conditions that would make floors potentially unsafe. In large part, management has a duty to keep their property safe and secure.

A simple solution to address problems of this type is to use high quality **entrance matting available from Mat-Tech.**