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Conditions Leading to Outdoor Slip and Fall Accidents

When the area where you slipped or tripped and fell is part of the property owner/possessor's premises, and he or she failed to take appropriate precautions or correct a problem that led to the accident, the owner/possessor will usually be legally responsible for your injuries. What follows are some examples of common conditions that lead to slip and fall accidents outdoors, and the rules regarding a property owner's duties with respect to those conditions.

Ice or Snow Outside a Building

Generally, the law doesn't require a property owner/possessor to remove ice or snow that accumulates outside his or her building as the result of weather. However, if conditions on the property cause an unnatural accumulation of ice or snow, the property owner may be liable for slip and fall accidents, such as when:

- Ice accumulates on the roof, then melts and drips off because of a clogged drain, then refreezes on the ground;
- The slopping surface of a parking lot causes melting ice to form puddles, and then refreeze into ice patches.

In addition, if a property owner/possessor elects to provide snow or ice removal, he must not do so negligently.

Inadequate Outdoor Lighting

Inadequate lighting may also lead to accidents involving falls in parking lots, trips over curbing, falls on a step or stairs from a parking lot to a store, and trips and falls due to holes, cracks, and uneven surfaces. A property owner/possessor may be liable if he or she knew or should have known of the poor lighting and failed to remedy the situation.

Parking Lots

A parking lot owner is responsible for maintaining the parking lot in a manner such that it is reasonably safe for people using it. This includes filling and patching cracks and holes. Additionally, differences in height from one section of the lot to another should be gradual rather than abrupt to prevent tripping injuries.

Sidewalks

Generally, a property owner is not responsible for injuries resulting from a fall on a public sidewalk located outside his or her property, but owned and maintained by a city or town. However, some courts will impose liability on a business for injuries on a sidewalk used exclusively by customers coming to and from the business, and a property owner will be responsible when a dangerous condition exists on his or her own private walkways.

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