Lessons Learned

Title: Business Owner's Liability Not Reduced by Client’s Negligence

Loss Amount: $200,000

Situation:
A pet owner brought his large dog into a veterinary hospital for routine examination. While they were seated in the lobby the dog’s drooling caused a slippery puddle. A veterinary assistant, planning to lead the dog to an exam room, didn’t see the puddle. She slipped and fell, fracturing her fibula bone.

Lessons Learned:
Slippery floors are a constant hazard in the lobbies of animal hospitals and clinics. Emphasis should be placed on quick actions by staff to clean them before accidents can occur.

To minimize the chances of slip and fall injuries in facility lobbies:

- Train receptionists and other staff working in the front to watch for slippery floors and instruct them on clean up procedures. The formality of these procedures will vary depending on the size and scope of the facility.
- Provide an adequate supply of quick clean up materials, such as paper or fabric towels and disinfectant, at the front desk. Colored towels can be especially effective for times when a facility is busy, as staff can toss one onto the hazard, drawing attention to it in advance of the cleanup process.
- For larger messes and periodic cleaning a mop is usually most effective. Keep these materials nearby the front also, and follow use of a wet mop with a dry one or towels. It is not unusual for slips and falls to occur after the floors are cleaned but before they are dry. Placing “Slippery Floor” signs may warn of a hazard but it will not eliminate it, or the prospect of an injury or insurance claim.
- Require slip-resistant footwear. These products come in virtually all styles and colors and should be required of all staff working in the industry.

For Further Assistance in the Prevention of all Types of Losses:

- Call VISC at 888.762.3143
- Call the Fireman's Fund Loss Control Help Desk toll-free at 888.527.6872

“Lessons Learned” is a monthly feature provided by the CVMA Insurance Program and is designed to promote practice safety, which contributes to employee well-being, morale, increased productivity, controlling insurance costs, and potentially enhancing your bottom line.

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