

Slips, Trips and Falls

Introduction

This information sheet will give employers practical advice on how to control risks from slips, trips and falls. It will help you to identify high-risk areas in your workplace where there is an increased

likelihood of a slip, trip or fall occurring. Slips, trips and falls on the same level can lead to serious injuries, with one in four resulting in an absence from work of over one month.

What do I have to do as an employer?

Employers have a responsibility to control risks from slips, trips and falls. This includes:

- > Conducting workplace specific slips, trips and falls risk assessment(s)
- > Putting in place controls to prevent slips, trips and falls
- > Carrying out checks to make sure those controls are in place and working
- > Providing personal protective equipment (e.g. slip resistant footwear) if required
- > Making sure employees receive appropriate training and instructions

What do employees have to do?

Employees' responsibilities include:

- > Reporting anything dangerous e.g. damaged flooring, spills
- > Using and taking proper care of any personal protective equipment (e.g. slip resistant footwear)

How do I carry out a risk assessment for slips, trips and falls?

A risk assessment is a careful examination of what could cause harm to people. It allows you to put in place control measures for eliminating or minimising the risk of harm from slips, trips and falls.

The extent of the control measures is determined by how serious the harm would be if no action was taken.

Key areas to consider when assessing the risk for slips, trips and falls include spills, high-risk areas, over-used warning signs, workplace cleanliness and shoes.

Spills

Spills can happen in any workplace causing wet floors which will increase the likelihood of a slip or fall occurring. To reduce this likelihood you should:

- > Identify areas at high risk of spills and locate absorbent materials nearby
- > Deal with spills straight away
- > Routinely monitor areas where spills are likely
- > Use absorbent material to soak up the spill
- > Where possible avoid using wet cleaning
- > Consider using spill kits
- > Ensure slip resistant footwear is provided and worn as needed

By identifying areas where spills may occur and putting controls in place in anticipation of the spills e.g. proper mats, sufficient drainage, drip trays, you will also reduce the risk.



Spills cause slips

These are areas where there are sources of liquid e.g. equipment using water, wash-up areas, showers, cleaning store, toilets, water dispenser, flowers, plants, deep fat fryers, hanging baskets.

Particular care is needed around self-service drinks areas and walk-in chiller and freezer floors if wet.

Small fruit / vegetable items with a high liquid content, such as grapes or tomatoes, may be a high slip risk if they fall onto the floor. Prepacked items can reduce the risk.

High-risk areas

The floor in a workplace must be suitable for the type of work being done. Where a floor can't be kept dry, people should be able to walk on it without fear of a slip, so it should have sufficient roughness (slip resistance) and must be fitted correctly to avoid slip hazards.

High-risk areas will include transition areas, where pedestrians move between surfaces with very different levels of grip, the most obvious being pedestrians going from wet to dry at entrances. These areas need to be identified and mats provided to remove excess moisture from footwear. Use heavy mats or ones with weighted edges or recess them into the floor to secure them and place them where people actually walk.



Trailing cables cause trips

Areas where levels change, e.g. slopes, ramps, steps / stairs, unexpected holes, bumps, drainage channels, are another high risk area.

Consider the following control measures:

- > Providing slip resistant surfaces
- > Providing adequate lighting
- > Highlighting changes in level
- > Providing proper drain covers
- > Keeping the top and bottom of stairs clean and tidy
- > Avoiding carrying items on stairs, e.g. by the use of dumb waiters
- > Identify poorly sited gas or liquid supply points and reroute where possible
- > Avoid the use of extension cables if possible
- > Use retractable reels
- > Tape down temporary trailing cables

Damaged flooring or paving can pose a high risk of trips and falls. You should identify any area where the surface is poorly maintained or damaged, repair the damage and take steps to prevent further damage.

Trailing cables and hoses also pose a significant trip hazard. To avoid this, try to:

- > Place equipment close to electrical outlets where possible
- > Site electrical outlets to avoid trailing cables

Slippery surfaces must be identified as these are also high-risk areas. As a rule of thumb, high gloss or highly reflective = high risk.

Consider changing or treating floor surfaces e.g. the addition of slip resistant materials, non-slip strips, or chemical treatment such as etching.

Pay particular attention to areas that may become slippery during winter weather. Grit or salt can be used to deal temporarily with snow or ice.

Ensure slip resistant footwear is provided and worn as needed.

Overused warning signs

Warning signs do not physically keep people away from wet floors. For programmed or routine floor cleaning, use a system that keeps pedestrians away from wet floors, e.g. physical barriers, cordons.

Warning signs must be removed when they no longer apply.



Warning sign with barrier

Workplace cleanliness

Procedures to ensure good housekeeping standards are vital. These may include:

- > Keeping walkways through the workplace clear – no trailing cables, no obstructions
- > Tidy as you go – don't leave tidying up until the end of shift
- > Keep floors and access routes clear
- > Keep messy operations away from pedestrian routes
- > Dispose of packing material and other wrappings carefully. Do not leave them lying around the floor
- > Inserts in papers and magazines may be slippery. Remove them promptly if they fall onto the floor



Poor housekeeping causes trips

For routine cleaning

- > Cleaning staff must be properly trained and instructed
- > Provide cleaning staff with slip resistant footwear and make sure they are worn
- > Before cleaning, check the floor to see if cleaning is actually required
- > As far as possible, dry cleaning (e.g. a microfibre brush for dust) should replace wet cleaning
- > Clean floors at times when there will be little or no traffic
- > Wherever possible cordon off the floor area being cleaned using a barrier
- > Organise cleaning to provide dry paths through areas being cleaned
- > When wet cleaning, remove excess liquid so that the floor dries as quickly as possible, and as far as possible clean the floor until dry

Shoes (safety footwear)

Employers should make sure personal protective equipment (PPE) is provided where risks cannot be avoided or reduced by other means. PPE must be provided free of charge to the employee. Consider the following:

- > For indoor slip resistance, choose a shoe with a well-defined tread pattern and a flexible sole

- > Consult with employees when choosing safety footwear as they are more likely to like and therefore wear them. Make sure they are comfortable and fit well
- > Footwear marked 'slip resistant' may not perform well in your workplace, so try them out before you buy
- > Footwear that performs well in wet conditions might not be suitable where there are food spills. The sole tread needs to be kept clear of waste. If they constantly clog up, the sole design is unsuitable for your workplace
- > With clogs, ensure an ankle strap is in place and used properly
- > If you use safety overshoes, check that they provide adequate slip resistance
- > Routinely check the soles of slip resistant footwear and replace as required
- > Choose footwear that is reasonably easy to clean and maintain
- > Where safety footwear is required, avoid open-toed shoes, sandals, flip-flops, high heels and smooth soles



Safety footwear with slip resistant soles