



Preventing slips, trips and falls at work



Over a third of all major injuries reported each year are caused as a result of a slip or trip (**the single most common cause of injuries at work**). These cost employers over £300 million a year in lost production and other costs.

Slips and trips are the most common cause of non-fatal major injuries in both manufacturing and service industries and account for over half of all reported injuries to members of the public.

Actions brought as a result of an injury can be extremely damaging to business, especially where the public are involved. Insurance covers only a small proportion of the costs.

Anyone at work, but particularly employers, can help to reduce slip and trip hazards through good health and safety arrangements.



Effective solutions are often simple, cheap and lead to other benefits.

What the law says

The **Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSWA)** requires employers to ensure the health and safety of all employees and anyone who may be affected by their work. This includes taking steps to control slip and trip risks.

Employees must not endanger themselves or others and must use any safety equipment provided.

Manufacturers and suppliers have a duty to ensure that their products are safe. Adequate information about appropriate use must also be provided.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 build on the HSWA and include duties on employers to assess risks (including slip and trip risks) and where necessary take action to safeguard health and safety.

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 require floors to be suitable, in good condition and free from obstructions. People must be able to move around safely.

Managing health and safety

A good management system will help you to identify problem areas, decide what to do, act on decisions made and check that the steps taken have been effective.

A good system should involve:

PLANNING: Identify key areas of risk and set goals for improvement. Carefully select equipment and work practices which prevent or contain slip and trip hazards. This helps to remove or minimise risks.



ORGANISATION: Workers need to be involved and committed to reducing risks. Give people responsibilities (eg supervisors) to ensure that areas of the workplace are kept safe. Keep a record of who is responsible for which arrangements. Make these details clear to everyone.

CONTROL: Check to ensure that working practices and processes are being carried out properly. Keep a record of cleaning, maintenance work etc and encourage good health and safety.

MONITOR AND REVIEW: Re-examine your approach in the light of experience. Look at accident investigation and inspection reports. Do they show any improvement? Talk to any safety representatives about slip and trip risks.

Examine slip and trip risks

All employers have to assess the risks to employees and others who may be affected by their work. This helps to find out what needs to be done to satisfy the law. HSE recommend a five step approach to risk assessment, and slip and trip risks should be among the risks examined.

STEP 1: Look for slip and trip hazards around the workplace, such as uneven floors, trailing cables, areas that are sometimes slippery due to spillages (include outdoor areas).



STEP 2: Decide who might be harmed and how. Who comes into the workplace? Are they at risk?

STEP 3: Consider the risks. Are the precautions already taken enough to deal with the risks?

STEP 4: Record your findings if you have five or more employees.

STEP 5: Regularly review the assessment. If any significant changes take place, make sure that



precautions are still adequate to deal with the risks.

Don't forget to consider employees who work away from the workplace. Look at the hazards and risks that they may come across so that proper training and equipment can be provided.

Good working practice

Get conditions right from the start, it will make dealing with slip and trip risks easier. Choose only suitable floor surfaces, ensure lighting levels are sufficient, properly plan pedestrian and traffic routes and avoid overcrowding.

Cleaning and maintenance

Train workers in the correct use of any safety and cleaning equipment provided.

Cleaning methods and equipment must be suitable for the type of surface being treated. You may need to get advice on the

appropriate method of treatment, eg from the manufacturer or supplier. Take care not to create additional slip or trip hazards while cleaning and maintenance work is being done.

Carry out all necessary maintenance work (you may need to get outside help or guidance). Include inspection, testing, adjustment and cleaning at suitable intervals. Keep records so that the system can be checked.

LIGHTING should enable people to see obstructions, potentially slippery areas etc, so they can work safely. Replace, repair or clean lights before levels become too low for safe work.



FLOORS need to be checked for loose finishes, holes and cracks, worn rugs and mats, etc.

Take care in the choice of floor if it is likely to become wet or dusty due to work processes.

OBSTRUCTIONS and objects left lying around can easily go unnoticed and cause a trip. Try to keep work areas tidy and if obstructions can't be removed, warn people using signs or barriers.

FOOTWEAR can play an important part in preventing slips and trips. Employers need to provide footwear if it is necessary to protect the safety of workers.

*There are many simple steps that can be taken to reduce risks.
Here are a few examples.*



Hazard	Suggested action
Spillage of wet and dry substances	Clean spills up immediately. If a liquid is greasy ensure a suitable cleaning agent is used. After cleaning the floor may be wet for some time. Use appropriate signs to tell people the floor is still wet and arrange alternative bypass routes.
Trailing cables	Position equipment to avoid cables crossing pedestrian routes, use cable covers to securely fix to surfaces, restrict access to prevent contact.
Miscellaneous rubbish, for example plastic bags	Keep areas clear, remove rubbish and do not allow to build up.
Rugs/mats	Ensure mats are securely fixed and do not have curling edges.
Slippery surfaces	Assess the cause and treat accordingly, for example treat chemically, appropriate cleaning method etc.
Change from wet to dry floor surface	Suitable footwear, warn of risks by using signs, locate doormats where these changes are likely.
Poor lighting	Improve lighting levels and placement of light fittings to ensure more even lighting of all floor areas.
Changes of level	Improve lighting, add apparent tread nosings.
Slopes	Improve visibility, provide hand rails, use floor markings.
Smoke/steam obscuring view	Eliminate or control by redirecting it away from risk areas; improve ventilation and warn of it.
Unsuitable footwear	Ensure workers choose suitable footwear, particularly with the correct type of sole. If the type of work requires special protective footwear the employer is required by law to provide it free of charge.

This leaflet is available in priced packs of 15 from HSE Books, ISBN 0 7176 1183 3. Single free copies are also available from HSE Books.

Further advice is available in the following HSE publications.

Slips and trips: Guidance for employers on identifying hazards and controlling risks HSG155 1996 ISBN 0 7176 1145 0

Slips and trips: Guidance for the food processing industry HSG156 1996 ISBN 0 7176 0832 8

The future availability and accuracy of the references listed in this publication cannot be guaranteed.

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This leaflet contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

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