



# Slips, Trips and Falls

## Introduction

This information sheet gives employers and employees practical advice on how to control the risks from slips, trips and falls. It will assist you in identifying high risk areas in your workplace where there is increased likelihood of a slip, trip or fall occurring. It will also outline the risk assessment process in relation to slips, trips and falls and give examples of how to eliminate or reduce the risk.

Slips, trips and falls on the same level are serious and account for about one fifth of all notified accidents. Many of these slips, trips and falls lead to serious injuries, with one in four resulting in an absence 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)
- Conducting audits as required to ensure responsibilities are met

- Providing personal protective equipment (e.g. slip-resistant footwear) if required
- Ensuring employees receive appropriate training and instructions

### What do employees have to do?

Employees also have responsibilities in relation to controlling the risk from slips, trips and falls, including:

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



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

The following are the steps to carrying out a risk assessment:

1. Look at the hazards
2. Decide who might be harmed and how
3. Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing control measures are adequate or whether more should be done

You will need to record your findings and review your risk assessments regularly.

The action taken must be proportionate to the risk involved, i.e. 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, environmental cleanliness and shoes.

## Spills

Spills can occur in every workplace and the resulting wet surface increases the likelihood of a slip or fall occurring. Therefore it is important to have procedures in place to reduce this likelihood.

- Deal with spills straight away
- Consider routine monitoring of areas where spills are a high risk
- Use absorbent material to soak up the spill
- Identify areas at high spill risk and locate absorbent materials nearby
- Where possible avoid using wet cleaning as this may spread the potential danger area
- Consider using spill kits
- Ensure slip resistant footwear is provided and worn as needed

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

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

Particular care may be required around self-service drinks areas. Walk-in chiller and freezer floors can be particularly hazardous if wet. Small fruit/vegetable items, some with a high liquid content e.g. grapes, 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 activity that will be taking place on it. Where a floor can't be kept dry, people should be able to walk on the floor without fear of a slip despite any contamination that may be on it. So it should have sufficient roughness (slip resistance) and must be fitted correctly to avoid slip hazards.

High risk areas need to be identified and dealt with to reduce the risk of slips, trips and falls occurring.

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 and exits.

You should ensure that:

- Precautions are taken to remove excess moisture from footwear
- Mats provided are properly designed/fitted and secured. Use heavy mats or ones with weighted edges or recess the mats into the floor
- Mats provided are placed where people actually walk

Areas where levels change, e.g. slopes, ramps, steps/ stairs, unexpected holes, bumps, drainage channels, are another high risk area. Controls to be considered include:

- Slip resistant surfaces are provided



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- Proper lighting is provided
- Changes in level are highlighted
- Proper drain covers are provided
- The top & bottom of stairs are kept clean & tidy
- Avoidance of carrying items on stairs, e.g. by use of dumb waiters

Damaged flooring or paving can pose a high risk of trips and subsequent falls. 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. Again these must be identified and controls put in place to reduce the risk. These include:

- Identify poorly sited gas, liquid supply points and reroute where possible
- Site electrical outlets to avoid trailing cables
- Place equipment close to electrical outlets where possible
- Avoid the use of extension cables if possible
- Use retractable reels
- Where a trailing cable is used temporarily, fix the cable down

Slippery surfaces must be identified as these are also high risk areas. As a rule of thumb, high gloss, highly reflective = high risk. Consider changing or treating floor surfaces, e.g. the addition of slip resistant materials, non-slip strips, and chemical treatment such as etching.

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

Ensure slip resistant footwear is provided and worn as needed

### Over Used Warning Signs

Warning signs do not physically keep people away from wet floors and do not substitute for necessary protective measures. For programmed/routine floor cleaning, use a system that keeps pedestrians away from wet/ moist floors, e.g. physical barriers, cordons.

Warning signs must be removed when they no longer apply.

### Environmental Cleanliness

Good housekeeping standards are everyone's responsibility; therefore procedures to ensure good housekeeping are vital. These may include:

- Ensure the walkways through the workplace are kept clear – no trailing cables, no obstructions
- Tidy as you go - don't leave tidy up until the end of shift
- Keep floors & access routes clear
- Keep particularly 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 - monitor and remove them promptly if they fall onto the floor



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## ■ For routine cleaning:

- Ensure cleaning staff have received proper training and instruction
- Provide cleaning staff with slip resistant footwear and ensure they are worn
- Before cleaning, assess the floor to see if cleaning is actually required
- As far as possible, dry cleaning (e.g. a dry microfibre brush) 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
- Where wet cleaning, use water at the right temperature and detergent
- Remove excess liquid to assist the floor drying process. As far as possible, clean the floor until dry

## Shoes (Safety Footwear)

Employers should ensure personal protective equipment (PPE) is provided where risks cannot be avoided or reduced by other means. PPE must be provided at no cost to the employee. Consider the following;

- For indoor slip resistance, choose a shoe with a well-defined tread pattern. The more edges, the firmer the grip. Good tread pattern and a flexible sole are important indoors
- Consult with employees when choosing safety footwear as they are more likely to like and therefore wear them. Ensure they are comfortable and fit well
- Footwear marked '**slip resistant**' may not perform well in your workplace, so try before you buy. Trial the footwear in your workplace
  - Footwear that performs well in wet conditions might not be suitable where there are food spillages. 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
  - Put in place routine checks of slip resistant footwear. Check the soles of shoes. Replace slip resistant footwear 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

