

RISK MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Slips, Trips & Falls

Introduction

Over a third of all major injuries reported each year are caused as a result of a slip or trip. They are 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 (HSW Act) 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 HSW Act 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.

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.

Reducing the Risks

Here are a few examples.

- Spillage of wet and dry substances. Clean spills up immediately. If a liquid is greasy ensure a suitable cleaning agent is used.
- After it has been cleaned 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 it 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, use appropriate cleaning method etc.
- Change from wet to dry floor surface. 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.

Further Information

Further advice is available in the following HSE publications.

Preventing Slips, Trips & Falls INDG 225 ISBN 07176 11833

Slips and Trips: Guidance for employers on identifying hazards and controlling risks HS(G)155 1996 ISBN 0 7176 1145 0

Slips and Trips: Guidance for the Food Processing Industry HS(G) 156 1996 ISBN 0 7176 0832 8

Many publications can be downloaded free from the HSE website:

www.open.gov.uk/hse/hsehome.htm

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