

Slips, Trips and Falls



Where we are at the moment.

According to the HSE, slips, trips and falls are the single most common cause of major injury in UK workplaces, accounting for more than half of all reported specified (major) injuries (57%) and almost a third of over seven day injuries to employees (29%) (HSE statistics 2013/14). In addition to employees being affected, members of the public and visitors can also be significantly affected, and civil claims as a result of uneven walkways and pavements have increased significantly. The HSE has calculated that one slip or trip incident occurs every three minutes. Because of the high incidence of slips, trips and falls within the workplace, the HSE initiated a "Shattered Lives campaign" in 2010, highlighting the need to manage and reduce risk.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/shatteredlives/>

Slips

Slips are caused by something reducing the friction between foot and floor. In most cases this will either be a liquid or ice, or a material such as an unsecured floor covering or an accumulation of dust or soft dirt. Examples of particular work situations that can cause slip hazards include areas:

- where spills occur - such as near drinks machines, in canteens or break out areas y where inappropriate loose floor coverings may be used - for example mats on polished wooden floors
- near doorways where water may be shed onto a floor - particularly a lino or vinyl covered floor - such as at a doorway where people enter the building from outside
- toilets, washrooms and shower rooms y where people are expected to walk where rain or snow may collect, or ice may form - for example in car park areas or on external pathways

- where cleaning processes will, even if only for a short time, leave wet or excessively slippery areas

Trips

The majority of trips are caused by obstructions in walkways. The rest are caused by uneven surfaces. Preventing these accidents is often simple and cost-effective.

You need to get all three right (walkways, housekeeping and design and maintenance), to prevent tripping accidents.



Preventing trips

Trip potential triangle



Walkways

Check for suitable walkways - Are they in the right place, are they being used, are they available for use?

What tasks are taking place on the walkway, is the task preventing the employee from seeing where he is going for example.

Housekeeping

It is not just good enough to have a walkway, it must be kept clear, no trailing wires, no obstructions. Employees and cleaners need to have 'a see it, sort it' attitude to ensure these and other work areas are kept clear. Is the cleaning regime effective? Are there enough bins, storage facilities etc?



Design and maintenance

Is the floor suitable for the environment, fitted correctly and properly maintained. Are the walkways wide enough & level. Are stairs suitable, are risers consistent, are nosings highlighted where necessary, are usable handrails available. Environmental factors also fall into this category, is the lighting good enough for employees to see hazards, what about distractions that might prevent them from seeing where they are going.

Falls

Employers and those in control of work at height must first assess the risks.

Before working at height you must follow these simple steps:

- avoid work at height where it is reasonably practicable to do so
- where work at height cannot be easily avoided, prevent falls using either an existing place of work that is already safe or the right type of equipment
- minimise the distance and consequences of a fall, by using the right type of equipment where the risk cannot be eliminated

You should:

- do as much work as possible from the ground

- ensure workers can get safely to and from where they work at height
- ensure equipment is suitable, stable and strong enough for the job, maintained and checked regularly
- not overload or overreach when working at height
- take precautions when working on or near fragile surfaces
- provide protection from falling objects
- consider emergency evacuation and rescue procedures



Guidance

Available from the HSE web site

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ck4.pdf>

Slips and trips, hazard spotting checklist.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg225.pdf>

Preventing slips and trips at Work

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg401.pdf>

Working at height, a brief guide

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg455.pdf>

Safe use of ladders and stepladders.

Trinity
Safety