

Slips and Trips

Why Control Slips and Trips

In many cases, slipping or tripping leads to more serious consequences – such as falling from a height, collision with moving vehicles, scalding from falling pans of hot liquid, or injury from sharp work tools. One 16 year old girl plunged her hand and arm into a deep fryer to save herself from slipping on a wet floor.

Most of these slipping and tripping accidents are reasonably foreseeable and could have been prevented by implementing simple control measures, for example 90% are caused by wet floors, which could have been sign-posted or screened off. The following sections identify common causes and typical control measures. In all cases, there is a duty for the employer to ensure the health and safety of employees and any other person in or around the workplace. This requires the provision of safe access and egress, information, and adequate warnings of any risks to health and safety.

Slipping Hazards and Control Measures

Accident statistics show that slipping injuries are especially linked with wet floors - slips occur when foot and floor surface cannot make effective contact or grip. This hazard is generally controlled and minimised by good housekeeping and maintenance, supplemented by encouragement to wear suitable footwear where the hazard cannot be completely eliminated.

Hazards Causing Slipping

- accidental spills or splashes of liquids (or solids)
- poorly drained or wet floors (e.g., following cleaning, or trailing in mud from outdoors)
- wet leaves, ice, rain, sleet or snow
- dusty floors
- sloping surfaces
- loose mats on polished floors, including laying cardboard over spills (a bad practice)
- change from a wet to a dry surface (footwear still wet)
- unsuitable or worn floor surface/covering
- unsuitable footwear, including worn or contaminated soles
- distracting adverse conditions – glare, shadows, and excess noise.

Typical Control Measures Checklist

- make arrangements to detect and deal with spills quickly (ensure staff are fully aware of procedures) - especially where members of the public are present. Do *not* try and hide the spill hazard (e.g., with sheets of cardboard) – make it obvious with warning signs. Make it clear via training that it is everyone's responsibility to report and act on spills as soon as possible
- clean up spills as soon as practicable: use a suitable cleaning agent for oils or grease. Do not cover with cardboard – it is a tripping hazard
- after wet cleaning use appropriate signs/barriers or arrange alternative bypass routes
- ensure that carpets, mats and rugs are securely fixed and do not have curling edges
- ensure adequate drainage of floor surfaces; in cold-weather conditions (frost, snow or sleet), salt or grit exterior surfaces where appropriate. Make arrangements for this to happen *before* the morning rush
- provide doormats and signs warning of the risks of coming from wet to dry areas. Make sure the mats are big enough to cope with the traffic
- ensure that floor surfaces are suitable for the traffic use (pedestrian and vehicle)
- ensure that slopes have good visibility, provide handrails and floor markings
- in autumn and winter, make sure you have effective procedures to clear wet leaves and apply salt and/or grit to icy surfaces
- ensure that employees wear suitable footwear. If risk assessment (see separate guidance note) indicates slip-resistant footwear, the employer *must* supply it free of charge.

Tripping Hazards and Control Measures

Accident statistics show that entrance matting and the condition of non-slip mats are especially linked to tripping accidents. Trips occur due to obstructions on the floor surface (clutter and debris), fixed or otherwise, or when a person's view of obstructions is impeded or obscured. These hazards are generally controlled and minimised by good planning, housekeeping and maintenance.

Hazards Causing Tripping Accidents

- loose floorboards and tiles
- loose or worn carpets and mats
- uneven floor surfaces (e.g., pavements and floor slabs), holes and cracks, bumps, ridges, protruding drain covers or nails, etc
- changes in surface level: ramps, steps and stairs
- cables across walking areas
- obstructions: materials, rubbish, etc (poor housekeeping)
- low wall and floor fixtures: door stops, catches, etc
- electrical and telephone socket outlets
- poor visibility or lighting – shadows, glares.

Typical Control Measures Checklist

- ensure that all floor surfaces suitably secured and well maintained: repair damaged surfaces, fill holes and cracks, etc
- ensure adequate lighting around changes in level, mark areas clearly, fit visually-apparent tread nosings

- ensure staircases, steps and access ramps are fitted with secure, robust handrails
- position equipment to avoid cables crossing pedestrian routes, use cable covers to securely fix to surfaces, restrict access to prevent contact
- keep access areas free from obstructions (housekeeping): clean regularly, do not allow rubbish to build up, store goods and materials in suitable receptacles. Ensure waste materials are regularly disposed of, especially flammable and combustible materials
- ensure all access areas are adequately lit: areas that are obscured by smoke or steam should be avoided wherever possible. If this is not practicable, improve ventilation and warn of the risks.