



Preventing Slips and Trips

September 2020

A guide to preventing slipping and tripping incidents at work





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Introduction

Slips, trips and falls on the same level are the most common cause of non-fatal injury at work in Britain, accounting for almost 30 per cent of all reported injuries to employees in 2018/19. These incidents can have a devastating impact on the affected person – causing serious injury and even long-term disability. However, they can also lead to major costs for a business – for example, from compensation payouts for injury claims.

However, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) says that in many cases, slips and trips can be prevented through straightforward measures – such as ensuring that spillages on floors are cleaned up promptly so people do not slip.

This guide provides an overview of some of the practical steps employers and those in control of buildings can take to eliminate or reduce the risk of slip and trip accidents.

Thomas Tevlin

Editor



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Preventing Slips and Trips

Although they are sometimes viewed in a jokey manner, slips, trips and falls on the same level are in fact the most common cause of non-fatal injury at work in Britain.

In fact, Health and Safety Executive (HSE) statistics show that slips, trips and falls accounted for 29 per cent of all non-fatal injuries to employees reported by employers to the authorities in Britain in 2018/19. This makes them the single biggest cause of non-fatal work injuries.

Worryingly, almost 8,000 of the approximate 20,000 non-fatal slip and trip injuries to employees in 2018/19 were 'specified' injuries - i.e. the most serious, such as broken bones. HSE also warns that slips and trips account for around half of all reported injuries to members of the public in workplaces where there is public access – such as hospitals, shops and restaurants.

Clearly, injuries resulting from slips and trips can have serious and devastating consequences for the affected workers and members of the public. Depending on the circumstances, slipping and tripping injuries can range from general soreness due to landing awkwardly to much more serious problems such as broken bones and long-term disability.

Slips and trips can also have a significant impact on the finances and reputation of the affected business. For example, employers may face civil legal claims for personal injury and HSE warns that a company's insurance may not cover all of the costs associated with

an accident. Other potentially negative impacts include the need to hire staff to cover absence due to injury and damage to the company's reputation due to its apparent failure to ensure the health and safety of workers, customers and visitors.

However, HSE says in many instances the risk of slips and trips can be controlled through straightforward, simple and inexpensive measures – such as ensuring spillages are cleaned up promptly so people do not slip and good housekeeping.

This guide provides an overview of some of the effective ways of preventing or reducing the risk of slips and trips at work. It is based on guidance from HSE, and more detailed information can be found on the regulator's website.

The causes

Generally speaking, slips happen when a person's foot cannot make effective contact with the floor or grip the floor surface properly.

HSE says most slips happen on wet or contaminated floors – for example, when the floor has become contaminated with substances such as water, oil, food debris

“

Slips and trips are the single biggest cause of non-fatal worker injuries.

Some facts and numbers

20,022

non-fatal injuries to employees, as a result of a slip, trip or fall on the same level, reported to the enforcing authorities by employers in Britain in 2018/19(p)

7,910

non-fatal 'specified' (i.e. major) injuries, such as broken bones, to employees as a result of a slip, trip or fall on the same level, reported by employers in Britain in 2018/19(p)

12,112

'over-seven-day' injuries (resulting in employees taking seven or more consecutive days of absence) reported by employers in Britain in 2018/19(p), due to a slip, trip or fall on the same level

29%

of all non-fatal injuries to employees reported to the enforcing authorities by employers in Britain in 2018/19(p) were caused by a slip, trip or fall on the same level



Sources: HSE 2018/19, hse.gov.uk/statistics (p = provisional)

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Employers have a legal duty to eliminate or reduce the risk of injury due to slips and trips.

or dust. It warns that if a floor has a smooth surface – for example, standard vinyl, glazed ceramic tiles or varnished wood – even a tiny amount of contamination can present a real slip hazard.

Also, people often slip on floors that have been left wet after cleaning – for example, because pedestrian access to the area has not been properly restricted until the floor has fully dried.

HSE adds that obstructions on the floor – such as items left in walkways – and damaged or uneven floor surfaces are the main causes of trip injuries at work.

It is also important to remember that slips and trips can lead to other serious incidents and injuries – such as a fall into moving machinery in a factory or a severe scalding if a worker slips or trips while carrying a container of hot liquid in a

kitchen. Other factors that can play a role in causing slips and trips include:

- Workers failing to spot contamination or obstacles on the ground due to poor lighting
- Workers rushing due to work pressures or poor organisation of the work
- Workers carrying large objects that prevent them from seeing where they are going and spotting slip and trip hazards.

What the law says

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSWA), employers are required to ensure – so far as is reasonably practicable – the health and safety of their employees and anyone else who could be affected by their work activities,

such as members of the public visiting the workplace or site. This includes taking all reasonably practicable measures to eliminate or adequately control the risk of slips and trips that could result in an injury or a case of ill health.

The Management of Health and Safety at work Regulations 1999 build on this by requiring employers to assess significant risks to the health and safety of workers and others who could be affected by the organisation's work activities – such as visiting members of the public. The regulations also require employers to take appropriate action to eliminate or control the significant health and safety risks. This includes assessing – and seeking to eliminate or minimise – the risk of slips and trips in the workplace or a public premises or site.

Also, the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 place a number of duties on employers aimed at ensuring a good standard of health, safety and welfare in and around the workplace. These include various requirements aimed at eliminating or reducing the risk of slip and trip injuries.

In particular, the Workplace Regulations require floors and pedestrian and vehicle traffic routes in the workplace – including areas such as corridors, staircases, ramps and external footpaths – to be of a suitable and sound construction and kept in good condition.

Employers must also ensure – as far as is reasonably practicable – that the floors and traffic routes used by pedestrians and vehicles are kept free from obstructions, articles or substances

that could cause a person to slip, trip or fall. Employers must also generally ensure that the surfaces of the floors and traffic routes do not have holes and are not uneven or slippery in a way that that could cause someone to slip, trip or fall.

Other duties imposed on employers by the Workplace Regulations that are relevant and important in preventing slips, trips and falls include ensuring that:

- There are sufficient traffic routes of a sufficient width to allow pedestrians and vehicles to circulate in a safe manner
- Workrooms have enough free space to allow people to move about with ease
- Suitable and sufficient lighting is provided to enable people to work and move about safely
- Suitable and sufficient handrails – and if necessary, guards or fencing – are provided on staircases where appropriate
- The workplace is kept sufficiently clean
- Waste materials are stored in suitable containers, so far as is as reasonably practicable
- There is an effective means of drainage from floors or traffic routes, where necessary
- The workplace is kept in efficient working order and in general good repair to prevent risks arising to people's health, safety and welfare.

The Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) on the Workplace Regulations also contains a variety of recommendations and guidance on ways of preventing slips and trips. These include general requirements that:

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- Surfaces of floors and traffic routes likely to get wet, or to be subject to spillages, should be of a type which does not become unduly slippery
- Where a leak, spillage or other type of contamination occurs and is likely to be a slipping hazard, immediate steps are taken to fence it off, clean it up, or cover it with something to stop it being slippery, such as absorbent granules
- Slopes should not be steeper than necessary, and moderate and steep slopes – and ramps used by people with disabilities – should have a secure handrail where necessary
- Where reasonably practicable, processes and plant that may discharge or leak liquids should be enclosed (for example, by bunding), and leaks from taps or discharge points on pipes, drums and tanks should be caught or drained away
- Arrangements should be made to minimise risks from snow and ice – for example, by clearing snow, gritting the area or closing pedestrian routes.

For further details see the Workplace Regulations ACOP and HSE leaflet at:

[hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l24.pdf](https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l24.pdf)

[hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg244.pdf](https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg244.pdf)

Under the HSWA 1974, employers are also required to provide whatever information, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety at work of their employees.

The Management Regulations build on this general duty by requiring employers to provide their employees

with “comprehensible and relevant” information on matters such as:

- The risks and hazards that employees may face at work
- The preventive and protective measures that are in place to eliminate or reduce the risks
- The steps to take if they encounter risks or hazards and how to work safely
- The responsibilities of employees to comply with safe working procedures
- The procedures to follow in an emergency.

The Management Regulations also set out a number of specific situations where adequate health and safety training must be provided to employees. These are:

- When employees first start work for the employer
- If employees are exposed to new or increased risks – for example, following a change to their role or their working environment.

The Management Regulations also require employers to repeat employees’ health and safety training “periodically where appropriate” – for example, if there is evidence to suggest that employees’ knowledge and skills need updating.

As a result, throughout its various guidance on preventing slips and trips, HSE stresses the importance of employers informing, training and supervising staff on matters such as:

- Helping to keep floors clean and dry
- Clearing up spillages straight away, from the floor or ground that could pose a slip or trip hazard
- Dealing with slip or trip hazards

Free guidance:

HSE offers a range of guidance on preventing slips and trips.



See:

hse.gov.uk/slips

“ Floors and traffic routes must be of a suitable construction and kept in good condition. ”

and risks, or reporting them to the employer

- The importance of reporting accidents or near misses as soon as they happen
- The importance of reporting problems and defects such as damaged floor surfaces, poorly maintained floor coverings and equipment defects, such as liquid leaks from machinery
- Keeping the workplace clear of obstacles that could pose a trip hazard
- If they are required to deal with spillages and to clean floors – for example, in their work area – the importance of not cutting corners and using the right cleaning equipment
- How to use and care for safety measures, such as any slip-resistant footwear they are provided with.

HSE also emphasises the importance of employers instructing, training and supervising all workers to have a ‘see it, sort it’ approach to dealing with slipping and tripping hazards quickly. This means, for example, dealing with spillages on floors promptly rather than waiting for someone else to deal with them

It is also important to remember that workers have general duties and responsibilities under health and safety law, and these are relevant to preventing incidents such as slips and trips.

In particular, workers must take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others who could be affected by their actions or inactions, such as colleagues and members of the public. Workers are also required to:

- Comply with their employer’s health and safety arrangements

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- Co-operate with their employer to help everyone comply with their health and safety legal duties
- Use all work items provided by their employer correctly
- Inform their employer of any work situation they think may be dangerous.

Health and safety law also requires employers to consult their employees – or the employee representatives, such as trade union safety representatives – about anything in the workplace or the work activities that could substantially affect employees' health and safety.

The idea is that, by giving employees suitable information about the health and safety hazards and risks – and taking account of their views on the best ways of controlling the dangers – employers can develop the most practical and effective health and safety risk controls.

HSE therefore stresses the importance of employers consulting employees and the employees' safety representatives (if they are in place), on what they think the slip and trip hazards are, as employees may have some good ideas on how to control the risks.

HSE also highlights the importance of adequately supervising staff to ensure they are following the instructions given about the measures to follow to help prevent slips and trips. This means supervising both workers in general and cleaning staff, whose work must be monitored to ensure cleaning is being carried out to the appropriate standard to minimise the risk of slips and trips.

Assessing and reducing the risks

HSE has published a range of guidance on how to identify slipping and tripping hazards and take steps to eliminate or reduce the associated risks.

Clearly, the nature and extent of the control measures required will depend on factors such as the type and size of the workplace, premises and work activities; the number and type of people who could be at risk of slipping, tripping or falling; and the likelihood and frequency of floors and traffic routes becoming wet, contaminated, damaged or blocked with obstructions that could pose a hazard.

When it comes to assessing the risks, employers should consider all areas of the workplace or premises where problems could occur. This includes internal floors, stairs, ramps and loading bays, and external areas such as car parks, pathways, the entrances to buildings and external stairways, fire escapes and ramps. The risk assessment should also consider everyone who could be at risk of a slip or trip. This includes employees, cleaning staff, visiting contractors, members of the public and particularly vulnerable individuals, such as older people or those with mobility challenges or disabilities.

If the employer has five or more employees, the significant findings of the risk assessment should be recorded. The risk assessment should be reviewed if there are significant changes that could mean people are being put at increased risk, such as the introduction of new hazards. It may also need to be reviewed if there are signs that the control



A smooth floor left wet or damp after cleaning can be extremely slippery, so steps should generally be taken to prevent people from walking in it, such as erecting barriers and warning signs.

measures are not be working correctly, such as an increase in slipping and tripping incidents.

HSE has produced a hazard spotting checklist with suggested solutions for removing or reducing various slip and trip risks and a paper-based 'mapping tool' to help the user identify potential slip and trip problems. HSE says these can help employers to identify problem areas and decide on possible solutions.

HSE says that when seeking to prevent slips and trips, employers should have a good management system to help identify problem areas, decide what to do, act on the decisions and check the steps have been effective. It says control measures for preventing slips and trips will generally include a combination of:

- Management systems
- Contamination control – including preventing floors from becoming contaminated with substances that could pose a slip risk and using the

correct cleaning methods to remove contamination

- Obstacle removal to avoid trip hazards
- Ensuring walkways and floor surfaces are suitable for the environment, fitted correctly and properly maintained.

HSE says some of the general, practical measures that can be taken include:

- Preventing floors from getting wet or contaminated in the first place
- Having effective arrangements for both routine and responsive cleaning
- Cleaning up spillages quickly
- If smooth floors are left wet after cleaning, preventing anyone walking on them until they are dry
- Using the correct cleaning methods and products
- Looking out for trip hazards, such as uneven floors and trialling cables
- Keeping walkways and work areas clear of obstructions
- Encouraging good housekeeping by workers

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- Ensuring the flooring is suitable and if the flooring is likely to get wet or have spillages on it, it is of a type that does not become unduly slippery
- Providing slip-resistant footwear to employees if slip hazards remain despite taking other precautions.

Suitable flooring

As stated, the Workplace Regulations require employers to ensure that floors and traffic routes are suitable for their intended purpose, in good condition and free of holes and obstructions.

The regulations also require that floors and traffic routes should generally not have uneven or slippery surfaces that could put people at risk of a suffering a slip, trip or fall. The ACOP on the regulations also states that if the floors or traffic routes are likely to become wet, or be subject to spillages, they should be of a type which does not become unduly slippery.

Clearly, one of the most effective ways of preventing and reducing the risk of slips is to install a slip-resistant floor surface – for example, when constructing or refurbishing a workplace.

HSE provides some general tips on the selection of slip-resistant flooring in its guidance leaflet on preventing slips in kitchens, at: [hse.gov.uk/pubns/cais6.pdf](https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/cais6.pdf)

In particular, it suggests employers:

- Specify a floor that will meet their needs, including sufficient slip-resistance for normal working conditions, ease of cleaning and hygiene
- Ask the flooring manufacturer or installer about the proposed floor's suitability for

the specific work environment

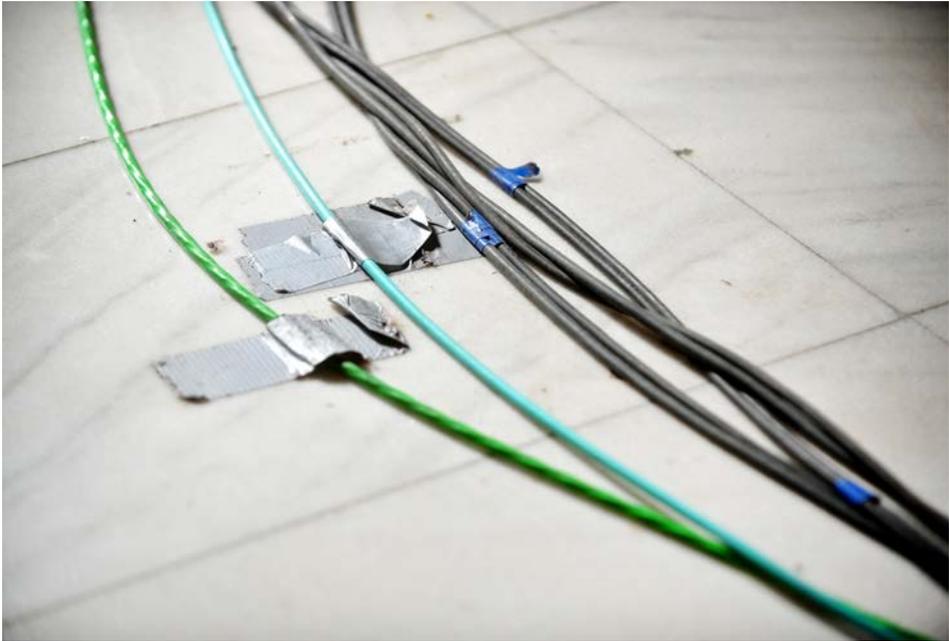
- Check that the floor is installed properly and matches the required specification
- Remember that, when replacing a floor, it can be an ideal time to also design out other hazards that could contribute to the risks of slips and trips.

HSE says it is sometimes possible to improve the slip resistance of existing floors and traffic routes – for example, by applying surface treatments that increase the surface roughness and attaching anti-slip strips. However, it is important these do not create new hazards – for example, by ensuring that bolt-on, anti-slip material does not create a trip hazard.

Employers can also carry out or commission tests to help them assess the slipperiness of the existing floor surfaces and traffic routes. HSE has developed a software package that can provide a general indication of the slipperiness of a floor surface when wet and more accurate assessments can be carried out by trained specialists using a pendulum tool. Information on these methods can be found on HSE's website.

Preventing contamination

HSE says that most slips happen when floors or traffic routes become wet, dirty or contaminated – for example, with water, oil, food, dust and dry materials such as plastic bags. Contamination can be caused by the work activity itself – such as food and oil spills in kitchens or factories – and can also be carried into a building – for example, rainwater and dirt on people's shoes. Condensation that



Cable covers are a useful way of preventing tripping hazards from trailing electrical leads.

forms on the floor, leaving a wet surface, is another cause of contamination.

If a floor has a smooth surface – such as standard vinyl, ceramic tiles or varnished wood – even a tiny amount of contamination can create a serious slip hazard.

As a result, employers should focus on preventing floors and traffic routes from becoming wet or contaminated in the first place. They should seek to identify where contamination might come from and try to prevent it from reaching the floor.

Depending on the type of workplace and work environment, a variety of measures can be taken to prevent floors and traffic routes from becoming contaminated, and HSE guidance

contains a variety of suggested steps.

For example, to help prevent rainwater from entering a building, it may be necessary to fit large, absorbent entrance mats for people to dry their shoes, to keep doors closed when necessary and to construct a canopy over the entrance.

A range of steps can also be taken to prevent contamination getting onto the floor in work settings such as food preparation areas, factories and warehouses. Tips from HSE include:

- Maintaining plant, equipment and buildings to prevent any leaks and fixing leaks promptly
- Providing adequate refuse bins
- Installing drip trays and bunding under

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- machines and plant that could leak
- Providing lids and covers for containers such as food pans
- Using extraction and ventilation systems to remove substances such as dust and steam and grease from food preparation, to prevent them from settling on floors and traffic routes
- Fitting screens to prevent splashes
- Providing good floor drainage
- Improving ventilation to stop condensation forming on the floor
- Providing sufficient hand drying facilities next to wash basins to stop water getting on the floor.

Employers should also consider if steps need to be taken to organise the work to help prevent the floors becoming contaminated. Tips from HSE include:

- Positioning 'messy' operations away from walkways and thoroughfares
- Planning pedestrian and vehicle routes to avoid contaminated areas
- Organising the work to remove or reduce the need for people to rush or turn sharply, which could cause them to spill liquids onto floors.

44%

of all 'specified' (i.e. major) injuries, such as broken bones, to employees reported by employers in Britain in 2018/19(p) were caused by a slip, trip or fall on the same level, (HSE 2018/19(p), p = provisional).

Cleaning regimes

Since contamination of the floor or traffic route with substances such as water, grease and oil is one of the main causes of slipping accidents, it is vital employers have an effective cleaning system in place to remove contamination. This means having effective procedures for both scheduled or regular floor cleaning and responsive cleaning.

General advice from HSE on establishing an effective cleaning regime includes:

- Planning to make sure the cleaning method is effective and appropriate for the type of floor, including how the floor is used, when it's used and the contaminants present
- Considering asking the flooring manufacturer, or the supplier of the cleaning product, about the best cleaning method, suitable detergents and the correct concentrations to use while cleaning
- Considering how sudden spillages and contamination will be cleaned up between the scheduled 'whole floor' or 'regular' floor cleaning
- Providing staff with instructions and training on how to use the right cleaning methods and materials
- Ensuring cleaners understand their duties and why cleaning has to be undertaken in a particular way or at a particular time
- Adequately supervising the cleaning to ensure it is being carried out to the correct standard.

HSE has published a variety of guidance on how to effectively clean workplace floors and traffic routes

to remove contamination that could pose a slip hazard. For example, it says 'spot cleaning' can be a useful way of quickly cleaning up small, water-based contamination as it happens, using absorbent paper towels or cloths to soak up the spill. It says this can avoid the need to 'wet mop' the area, which can itself increase the slip risk by creating a wet floor over a bigger area.

Other general tips from HSE include:

- Use the correct amount of the right cleaning product
- Allow detergents enough time to work on greasy floors
- A dry mop or 'squeegee' used on a smooth, wet floor will reduce the floor-drying time, but while the floor is damp there is still a slip risk
- Even using a well-wrung mop will leave a thin film of water which is sufficient enough to create a slip risk on a smooth floor.

It is also important to remember the cleaning process itself can create or introduce slipping and tripping hazards. For example, a smooth floor left wet or damp after mopping is likely to be slippery, posing a risk to anyone who walks on it.

If a smooth floor will be left wet or damp after cleaning, appropriate steps should be taken to prevent pedestrians from access the area until the floor has dried completely. General tips from HSE for preventing pedestrians from accessing a floor while it is drying include:

- Cleaning during quieter hours when pedestrians are not around
- Physically excluding people from wet

cleaning areas – for example, using physical barriers, locking off the area or locking doors

- Cleaning in sections, so there is a dry path through the area
- Providing information on alternative routes
- Using warning signs and cones to highlight the wet floor and slip or trip hazard.

See HSE's guidance for more detailed advice on effective cleaning methods.

Environmental conditions

The risk of someone slipping or tripping can also be influenced by environmental factors. These include the level of lighting; condensation forming on floors and traffic routes; cold weather causing frost and ice to form; and loud or unfamiliar noises distracting people and therefore causing them to fail to see slip or trip hazards.

Employers should therefore consider the role environmental factors could play in causing slips and trips and take steps to eliminate or control the risks.

As stated, the Workplace Regulations require employers to provide suitable and sufficient lighting in the workplace to enable people to work and move about safely. This includes both inside buildings and in external areas, such as on pedestrian pathways leading to and from the building.

Meanwhile, if excessive light on a smooth, shiny floor is causing glare that could prevent people from seeing hazards on floors, stairs and ramps, ways of avoiding this include re-angling the

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lighting, fitting blinds or removing the floor surface shine.

Other advice from HSE on tackling environmental conditions includes:

- If ice is building up on the floor of a cold store, check that the freezer's door is closing and sealing properly, as this can cause ice to build up
- If a build-up of leaves, wet grass, moss or mud could pose a slip risk on outdoor footpaths, steps and fire escapes, establish a maintenance schedule for removing them.

Stairs, ramps and slopes

As well as the tackling the risk of slips and trips on floors and pedestrian routes, such as corridors, employers need to minimise the risk of slips, trips or falls on stairs, steps, slopes and ramps.

To help prevent slips, trips and falls on stairs, the Workplace Regulations require employers to ensure suitable and sufficient handrails are provided on all staircases in the workplace, unless a handrail would obstruct people's entry or exit, such as on the steps in a theatre aisle.

The ACOP on the regulations states a handrail should generally be provided on at least one side of every staircases and on both sides if there is a particular risk of falling – for example, because the stairs are heavily used, have narrow treads or are liable to have spillages on them. The ACOP also says additional handrails should be provided down the centre of particularly wide staircases where necessary. The ACOP further states that the open sides of staircases should be

fenced with an upper rail of 900mm or higher and a lower rail, to prevent people falling from them.

Meanwhile, general tips from HSE on reducing the risks of slips, trips and falls on stairs and steps, include:

- If the edges of steps are slippery or difficult to see, consider if it is possible, and safe, to highlight the very edge of the step with a nosing that has a high-visibility and non-slip finish (however, these must be securely fixed and not pose a slip or trip hazard)
- If the stair treads are slippery, thoroughly clean them on a regular basis to remove contaminants and/or consider replacing the stair covering with one that offers better slip-resistance.

The ACOP on the Workplace Regulations also states that any slopes in the workplace should not be any steeper than necessary and moderate and steep slopes, and ramps used by people with disabilities, should be fitted with one or more secure handrails where necessary.

HSE guidance states that, if it could be difficult for people to see ramps, slopes or subtle changes in the floor level, employers should consider highlighting the hazard using eye-catching or contrasting colours or slip-resistant coloured paints.

Providing footwear

Under UK health and safety law, employers must first attempt to remove or reduce the risk of people suffering slips and trips through approaches such as general controls and safe system of

work. These might include measures such as improving the slip-resistance of floors and traffic routes and establishing adequate maintenance, cleaning and housekeeping regimes to keep floors and traffic routes free of slip and trip hazards.

However, if a slip risk remains, it may be necessary and appropriate to provide employees with slip-resistant footwear to further reduce the risk of slipping accidents. In fact, the Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 1992 require employers to provide employees with suitable personal protective equipment (PPE) – such as slip-resistant footwear – if any significant risks to employees' health and safety cannot be removed or adequately controlled in other ways.

HSE warns that choosing slip-resistant footwear from the range of products on the market can sometimes be difficult – for example, because different types of footwear can perform differently in different situations. It therefore recommends employers take account of a number of factors when choosing slip-resistant footwear. These include the slip-resistance provided; the work environment; the type of contaminants present; the work being carried out; the level of comfort provided by the footwear; and the need for additional safety features, such as toe protection against heavy falling objects.

HSE says employers should think about factors such as the main floor surfaces and contaminants found at work and consider asking the supplier's advice on the most suitable slip-resistant footwear for the environment, risks and

tasks. It also recommends trialling any footwear with a representative sample of the workforce to help ensure the most suitable type is selected. HSE says that if workers are involved in choosing items of PPE – including footwear – they are generally more likely to wear it. Also, if footwear is uncomfortable or impractical, workers may be tempted not to wear it.

Other general tips from HSE on the selection and use of footwear include:

- Some generally slip-resistant footwear may not be suitable in specific conditions – for example, footwear that performs well in the wet may not be suitable on oily surfaces or where there are sticky food spillages which clog up the cleats
- The sole tread pattern and sole compound are both important for slip resistance – generally, a softer sole and close-packed tread pattern work well with fluid contaminants and indoor environments; while a more open pattern works better outdoors or with solid contaminants
- The sole tread pattern should not become clogged with any waste or debris on the floor, and, if it does,

104,000

workers in Britain reported being injured in a slip, trip or fall on the same level at work, on average annually during 2016-2019 (Great Britain Labour Force Survey, LFS, 2016-19)

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the sole design is unsuitable for the situation and footwear with an alternative design of sole, such as a wider space between the cleats and a deeper tread pattern, should be considered

- Slip-resistance properties can change with wear – for example, some soles can deteriorate with wear, especially when the cleats become worn down
- ‘Oil-resistant’ does not mean ‘slip-resistant’ – the former is just a statement that the soles will not be damaged by oil.

It is also important to remember that, if employees are required to wear footwear to help reduce the risk of a slip or other injury at work, by law it is defined as PPE and must be provided free of charge. Under the PPE Regulations, employers must also be provided with adequate information and training on how to use and look after PPE, including footwear. Finally, HSE recommends that employers establish a system for checking and replacing slip-resistant footwear before it becomes worn and dangerous.

24%

of all ‘over-seven-day’ injuries (resulting in employees taking seven or more consecutive days of absence) reported by employers in Britain in 2018/19(p), were caused by a slip, trip or fall on the same level (HSE, 2018/19(p), p = provisional).

Preventing trips

HSE says that trips generally happen on damaged, uneven or badly laid floors and other pedestrian surfaces or because obstructions or obstacles have been left on or in pedestrian routes or areas.

As a result, it recommends that when seeking to prevent trips, employers focus on measures such as:

- Properly organising the workplace and work tasks
- Ensuring the good design and maintenance of walkways, including floors, floor coverings, steps, ramps and external pathways
- Training and encouraging staff to keep work areas and traffic routes clear of obstructions and to report trip hazards such as damaged floor coverings and holes in footpaths.

As stated, the Workplace Regulations require employers to ensure that floors and traffic routes used by pedestrians and vehicles are of sound construction and strong enough for the people and vehicular traffic using them. They also require that floors and traffic routes must generally not have any holes or uneven surfaces and should be kept free of obstructions, articles and substances that could cause someone to slip, trip or fall, as far as is reasonably practicable.

In addition, the regulations require employers to ensure that all aspects of the workplace are maintained in efficient working order and good repair, including floors and traffic routes.

As a result, employers should generally establish a suitable maintenance system to ensure that the

internal and external floors and traffic routes are regularly checked for hazards such as holes and damage, uneven paving, loose floor tiles and curling carpet edges. Damaged areas must be repaired promptly or clearly marked and/or protected until they can be fixed or replaced – for example, by using barriers to prevent pedestrian access.

HSE also stresses the importance of properly organising the workplace and the tasks to help eliminate or minimise trip hazards and to keep floors and traffic routes free of obstructions. Some practical suggestions for this include:

- Establishing a well-organised goods ‘in and out’ system so deliveries or outgoing items are not placed in areas where they could cause an obstruction or trip hazard
- Providing sufficient storage space for materials, goods and equipment to keep them out of traffic routes and workstations
- Organising tasks to avoid the need for workers to carry items that could restrict their view of trip hazards – for example, by providing mechanical handling aids such as trolleys
- Providing sufficient waste and recycling bins in convenient locations
- Marking out walkways to make it easier for people to identify and understand that the pedestrian route need to be kept clear
- Keeping electrical cables out of walkways or covering them with high visibility, anti-trip cable covers
- Minimising the operating length of electrical cables by using the nearest

available power socket or installing additional sockets closer to the area

- Using battery-powered equipment instead of mains-powered equipment with a trailing cable.

HSE also stresses the importance of training and supervising all workers on keeping the workplace and traffic routes clear of trip hazards and reporting problems such as damaged floor surfaces and obstructions.

Winter weather

Icy and snowy weather can increase the risk of slips and trips in the outdoor areas of workplaces and sites open to the public – for example, by making footpaths and car parks slippery to walk on.

As a result, the ACOP on the Workplace Regulations states that employers should, where appropriate, make arrangements to minimise the slip risks from snow and ice. It says this could mean considering measures such as gritting icy footpaths, clearing snow or diverting people to less slippery routes.

HSE says employers should identify the areas used by pedestrians that could become slippery in frosty or icy conditions and if necessary consider measures such as gritting them. The most commonly used form of grit is rock salt, which can stop ice forming and cause existing ice or snow to melt. HSE says gritting should be carried out when frost, ice or snow is forecast or when walkways are likely to be damp or wet and the floor temperatures are at,

Preventing Slips and Trips

or below, freezing. The rock salt doesn't work instantly and needs sufficient time to dissolve into the moisture on the floor, so the best times to apply it are generally early in evening before the frost settles and/or early in the morning before employees arrive.

Other ways of reducing the risks include covering walkways with canopies to help prevent ice and snow settling on the footpath and diverting pedestrians to less slippery walkways.

Finally...

Although slips and trips can happen in any workplace or public building, HSE says in many cases they can be prevented through simple and straightforward measures.

However, as with any health and safety hazard or risk, it is essential to have a good management system to identify the problems, implement the appropriate control measures and check the safety controls are having the desired effect.

It is also vital to provide workers and cleaning staff with adequate information, instruction and supervision so they fully understand the role they can play in preventing slips and trips.

In this way, the distress, pain and disabilities caused by slip and trip accidents at work can be prevented, and businesses can also save themselves money.

Get the poster:

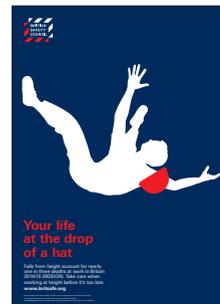
Remind workers to watch out for slip and trip hazards:



To download a free copy go to:
www.britsafe.org/coronavirus

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Related posters:



Recommended reading

Health and safety made simple
hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety

Health and safety toolbox
hse.gov.uk/toolbox

Managing risks and risk assessment at work
hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/index.htm

Risk assessment. A brief guide to controlling risks in the workplace
hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf

Risk assessment template and examples
hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/risk-assessment-template-and-examples.htm

Managing for health and safety
hse.gov.uk/managing

Slips and trips HSE microsite
hse.gov.uk/slips/index.htm

Preventing slips and trips at work
hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg225.pdf

Hazard spotting checklist: slips and trips
hse.gov.uk/pubns/ck4.pdf

Slips and trips mapping tool: an aid for safety representatives
hse.gov.uk/slips/mappingtool.pdf

Slips and trips: the importance of floor cleaning
hse.gov.uk/pubns/web/slips02.pdf

Assessing the slip resistance of flooring
hse.gov.uk/pubns/geis2.pdf

Preventing slips and trips in kitchens and food service
hse.gov.uk/pubns/cais6.pdf

Slips and trips e-learning package (STEP)
hse.gov.uk/slips/step/index.htm

Slips Assessment Tool (SAT)
hse.gov.uk/slips/sat/index.htm

Slips and trips – case studies
hse.gov.uk/slips/casestudies.htm
hse.gov.uk/slips/audiovideo.htm

Cleaning industry HSE microsite
hse.gov.uk/cleaning/index.htm

Shattered Lives – campaign guides and posters
hse.gov.uk/shatteredlives/index.htm

Watch Your Step – campaign guides and posters
hse.gov.uk/watchyourstep/about.htm

Watch Your Step – construction toolbox talk video
bit.ly/2ErJMmx

Stop slips in kitchens – campaign resources
hse.gov.uk/slips/kitchens/index.htm

Slips in catering and hospitality; construction; education; food manufacturing; haulage; and health services – HSE microsites
hse.gov.uk/slips/links.htm

Workplace health, safety and welfare: a short guide for managers
hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg244.pdf

Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992. ACOP and guidance (L24)
hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l24.pdf

Lighting at work
hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg38.pdf

Manual handling at work: a brief guide
hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg143.pdf

Ergonomics and human factors at work
hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg90.pdf

A short guide to the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992
hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg174.pdf

Further information

British Safety Council

Charity that offers training courses that teach managers and employees how to avoid or reduce the risks from various health and safety hazards.

The courses include e-learning for workers on how to prevent slips and trips and on general health and safety precautions. There are also e-learning courses for workers on how to reduce the risks from activities that could contribute to a slip or trip incident, such as manual handling. There are also detailed training courses and qualifications for managers and supervisors that help them to assess and manage all types of health and safety risks.

www.britsafe.org

Fit for Work/Fit for Work Scotland

Government-funded service that provides employers, employees and GPs in England and Wales with free and confidential advice on enabling sick and injured workers to remain in and return to work.

fitforwork.org
fitforworkscotland.scot

Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

Responsible for enforcing health and safety law at most industrial workplaces in the UK. Offers a wide range of online guidance on managing health and safety risks, including from slips and trips.

hse.gov.uk

Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI)

Enforces health and safety law in Northern Ireland. Also published free and priced guidance publications for employers.

hseni.gov.uk

Healthy Working Lives (Scotland)

Free health and safety advice service for Scottish employers of all sizes.

www.healthyworkinglives.com

Healthy Working Wales

Free health and safety advice service for employers and employees in Wales.

www.healthyworkingwales.wales.nhs.uk/home

IOSH

Chartered body and membership organisation for safety and health professionals around the world. Provides free guidance for employers on managing health and safety risks.

iosh.com

Shattered Lives campaign

Webpage for HSE's previous 'Shattered Lives' slips, trips and falls campaign. The webpage features a variety of advice and guidance for industries such as catering, construction, education, food and drink manufacturing and retailing and health and social care. The available resources include free posters.

hse.gov.uk/shatteredlives

Trades Union Congress (TUC)

Provides a variety of guidance to help trade union representatives manage risks to workers' health, safety and welfare.

tuc.org.uk



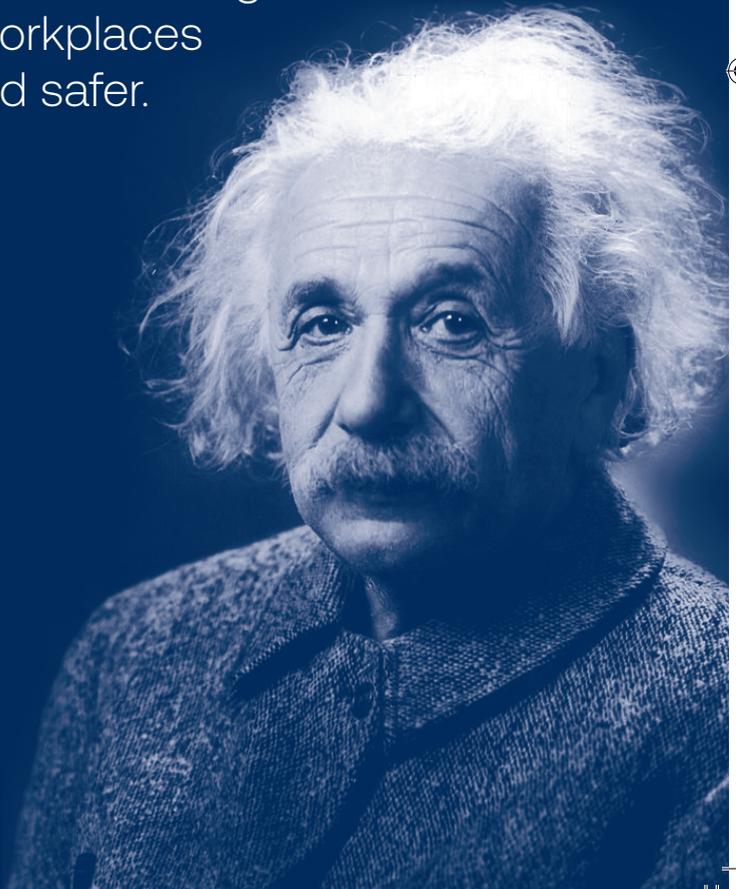
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