

SLIPS AND TRIPS

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INTRODUCTION

Slips and trips, together with resulting falls, are the main cause of major injuries at work amounting to some 30% of the total, on average. In 1993-1994 over 33,000 slip, trip and fall injuries were reported to enforcing authorities. Costs to business can include civil damages, administration and insurance costs, lost production and absences from work; these cost employers about £300 million per year. Although slips, trips and falls can occur in all business sectors, they are highest in the food industry where they are the subject of further, specific advice.

Effective solutions are often simple, cheap and can form part of a system to manage preventative measures which control slip and trip risks.

MANAGING THE PROBLEM OF SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS

The recommended 5-step approach to risk assessment provides a useful framework when tackling slips and trips, as follows:

1. Identify hazards.
2. Decide who might be harmed and how.
3. Evaluate the risks.
4. Record your findings.
5. Review the assessments from time to time.

Slip Hazards e.g.

- spills and splashes of liquids and solids
- wet floors
- unsuitable footwear
- loose mats on polished floors
- inclement weather
- change from a wet to a dry surface
- unsuitable floor surface/covering
- dusty floors
- sloping surfaces

Trip Hazards e.g.

- loose flooring/floor covering
- worn floor covering
- holes, cracks
- uneven outdoor surfaces
- changes in surface level
- trailing cables
- obstructions

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Increased risk may arise from hazards due to the following factors:

- poorly organised walkways
- inadequate/unsuitable lighting
- incorrect cleaning procedures
- moving/handling a load
- rushing around
- fatigue

MEASURES TO ELIMINATE OR REDUCE RISKS COULD INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

HAZARD

SUGGESTED ACTION

- **Spillage of wet and dry substances** Clean spills up immediately and effectively. After cleaning, 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 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, appropriate cleaning method etc.
- **Change from wet to dry floor surface** Suitable footwear; 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/obvious 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.

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Booklet HS(G) 155 - 'Slips and trips - Guidance for employers on identifying hazards and controlling risks' is a useful booklet, containing extensive advice. Its appendices cover floors and footwear in considerable, practical depth.

SLIPS AND TRIPS IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY

Specific guidance has been produced for the food industry, as the number of slips and trips is significantly higher than in other industries. The following summarised advice and guidance is taken from booklet HS(G) 156 - 'Slips and trips - guidance for the food processing industry'.

1. How slips and trips are caused

- Slips are far more frequent than trips, accounting for 86% of all slip and trip injuries. Contamination of the floor is a key factor (by water, wet/greasy products or lubricants)
- Trips still occur at twice the average rate in industry generally. Around 72% are caused by obstruction, and 28% by uneven surfaces.

2. Managing the preventative measures

- Need different approaches for slips and trips. i.e.

SLIPS:

- (i) avoid getting contamination between the floor and the sole of the shoe.
- (ii) improved slip resistance and drainage of flooring
- (iii) appropriate footwear
- (iv) enhanced ways of working and moving

TRIPS:

- (i) good housekeeping
 - (ii) good initial design and subsequent maintenance of floors and floor coverings
- Prioritise/target actions - e.g. which locations are worst? The most likely areas for injuries are production (38%), stores and packing (25%, external (exposed) areas (20%) and welfare accommodation (10%).

Ensuring suitable arrangements to prevent slips and trips should involve:

- written arrangements
- identified priorities
- deciding what more should be done
- consideration of hygiene implications
- engendering a safety culture
- an appropriate organisational framework (personal duties and responsibilities)
- monitoring/auditing

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- The guidance booklet, HS(G) 156, gives extensive practical advice (within a checklist format) on measures for controlling slip and trip risks, under headings of
 - Environmental factors
 - Organisational factors
 - Personal protective equipment (slips only)
 - Individual factors

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CHECKLIST - SLIPS AND TRIPS

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|----|--|-----|----|
| 1. | Have you recognised/identified slips and trips as a significant cause of injury? | YES | NO |
| 2. | Have you identified all slip and trip hazards in your premises? | YES | NO |
| 3. | Have you prioritised your actions, focussing on areas or locations of highest risk? | YES | NO |
| 4. | Have you evaluated the risks from slips and trips and considered what control measures are required? | YES | NO |
| 5. | Have you implemented the required control measures? | YES | NO |
| 6. | Have appropriate working practices and procedures been established, documented and been used in the provision of information, instruction and training of employees? | YES | NO |

REFERENCES/FURTHER DETAILS

- * 1. Booklet HS(G)155 - Slips and trips: guidance for employers on identifying hazards and controlling risks. ISBN 0-7176-1145-0 (HSE).
- * 2. Booklet HS(G)156 - Slips and trips: guidance for the food processing industry. HSE ISBN 0-7176-0832-8
- ** 3. Leaflet IND(G)225(L) Preventing slips, trips and falls at work (HSE). www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg225.pdf
- * 4. Booklet L24 Workplace health, safety and welfare. Approved Code of Practice. (HSE) ISBN 0-7176-0413-6

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- * Available to view by prior arrangement at Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Environmental Health Services, Council House, Coton Road, Nuneaton. CV11 5AA
 - ** Free copy available from Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council at the above address.

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