



Slips, Trips & Falls – Q&A

What are the common reasons that people slip, trip and fall?

There are many reasons why people slip, trip or fall. The most common reasons are associated with:

- the floor
- contamination on the floor (or footwear)
- obstacles on the floor
- cleaning of the floors
- damaged flooring
- missing handrails inappropriate footwear
- environmental factors, such as: poor lighting etc

Are there any simple steps that can be taken to reduce the incidence of slips, trips and falls?

Although slips, trips and falls may be the most common cause of accidents, they can be controlled and managed by appropriate work practices and (generally) with very little expenditure. The actions relevant to a particular property should be determined by risk assessment. Some of the key areas to address are discussed below.

Floors

1. **Design** - The floor should be suitable for its intended use and environment and for the type of work activity that may take place on it. Walkways should be wide enough to allow safe passage of the type and volume of foot (and other) traffic that is expected. If a floor is situated in places where it cannot be kept dry, then people should still be able to walk on it without fear of a slip. This is an important design feature in place such as leisure centres, swimming pools, cold storage areas, kitchens, etc. The floor must be fitted correctly to ensure that there are no trip hazards.

2. **Floor cleaning** - Floor cleaning can make the floor slippery during cleaning and as a result of the materials used in cleaning. The floor must be cleaned correctly to ensure that it does not become slippery or keeps its slip resistance properties (if a non slip floor). Although it is often not possible, normal cleaning activities should be carried out when the premises are unoccupied (or last thing at night).

Appropriate barriers (such as Yellow "A" Frames) should be provided to warn people that the floor is still wet. Appropriate cleaning techniques should be introduced, such as: using a dry mop/squeegee to reduce floor drying time. In some cases, it would be appropriate to arrange alternative bypass routes. Consideration should be given to the tripping risks created by trailing vacuum cleaner cables, etc.

3. **Maintenance of floor** - The floors and floor coverings (carpets, tiles, etc.) must be maintained in good condition in order to ensure that trip hazards are not present and that they do not develop. Holes in the floor should be filled in and carpets and other floor coverings should be secured into place.

It should be ensured that mats do not slip and slide on the floor surface. It may be appropriate to use a lay of materials to adhere the mat to the floor in normal use. It should be ensured that mats and carpets do not turn up and the edges to create tripping hazards.



4. Awareness of changes in elevation - Where reasonably practicable, ramps, raised platforms and other changes of level should be avoided. Where they cannot be avoided, they should be highlighted, such as by suitable warning notices, signs, use of colour or other highlighting techniques.

5. Steps and stairs - Steps and stairs should be well lit and designed so as to be suitable for their intended use and environment. They should be well lit and provided with robust handrails, ideally on each side. Consideration should be given to the height and width steps.

The risers should be consistent and the nosings on the steps and stairs should be clearly marked in colours that contrast with the rest of the steps.

Housekeeping and Active Monitoring

Even if walkways are suitable and satisfactory, they need to be maintained in this condition. Further to this, good standards of housekeeping need to be maintained. Regular, active monitoring of walkways is essential to prevent issues from developing.

Regular walk rounds of the premises can identify issues such as:

- inappropriately routed or protected trailing wires (such as may be associated with short term
- building maintenance activities)
- water or other fluids from leaking roofs or pipework
- spillages
- general accumulation of detritus and other obstructions
- lighting

Trailing cables

Trailing cables should be avoided whenever possible. Equipment should be positioned to avoid cables crossing pedestrian routes and proprietary cable covers should be securely fixed into place if cables need to be trailed. Consideration should be given to the use of cordless portable tools.

Spillages

Suitable arrangements should be in place to deal with (wet and dry) spillages. These should be reported and dealt with as soon as they happen or as soon as they are noticed. The nature of any spillage response provision or spillage cleaning kit will depend on the nature of any expected spillages.

Other issues

1. Known slippery surfaces or conditions - Where certain floors are known to be slippery or are known to be slippery when wet, then these areas should be assessed and the cause of the slipperiness should be treated accordingly.

By way of example:

- it may be appropriate to provide weather mats at the entrances to premises to prevent water from being brought in on peoples shoes and making a polished marble floor extremely slippery
- it may be necessary to have a floor chemically treated and to introduce the use of appropriate cleaning methods and materials
- gritting materials may need to be provided to make external paths and walkways safe in cold weather



2. **Drinks machines and dispensers** - The floors around drinks machines and dispensers may become slippery due to spillages of water, tea, coffee, etc. It may be appropriate to:

- resite such machines to be away from main walkways and through routes
- to fit absorbent carpets around the machines

3. **Lighting** - Ensure that lighting levels are suitable for the area and should avoid casting shadows across the walkway or staircase. Ensure that defective lighting is addressed as soon as it is reported.

4. **Footwear** - Instruct workers to wear suitable footwear, particularly with the correct type of sole. If the type of work requires protective footwear to be provided, then the employer is required by law to provide it free of charge. Unfortunately, occupiers of premises have virtually no control on the type of footwear worn by visitors.