

the law

England, Scotland and Wales

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992

Northern Ireland

The Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993

Slips and Trips

Most slips occur when floors become wet or contaminated, and many trips are due to poor housekeeping.

The solutions are often simple and cost-effective, and a basic assessment of the risks should help to identify what you can do to tackle slip and trip risks.

What are the hazards?

Slips and trips are the most common cause of injury at work and can lead to other types of accidents, such as falls from height or falls into machinery. Over 10,000 workers suffered serious injury due to a slip or trip in 2012.

Slips and trips also account for half of all reported injuries to members of the public in workplaces where there is public access, such as hospitals, shops and restaurants.

Slips and trips are responsible for, on average:

- Over one-third of all reported major injuries
- Twenty per cent of employee injuries that take over three days to recover
- Two fatalities per year
- Fifty per cent of all reported accidents to members of the public that happen in workplaces
- Cost to employers of £512 million per year (lost production and other costs)
- Cost to health service of £133 million per year
- Incalculable human cost
- More major injuries in manufacturing and in the service sectors than any other cause of injury

What do I have to do?

All employers must assess the risks to employees and others who may be affected by their work, such as visitors and members of the public. You need to think about what might cause slips or trips in your workplace and decide whether you are doing enough to prevent them. Below are steps you should take as part of a risk assessment.

Step 1

Look for slip and trip hazards around the workplace, such as uneven floors, trailing cables and areas that are sometimes slippery due to spills. Include outdoor areas.

Step 2

Determine the following:

- Who might be harmed? How?
- Who comes into the workplace?
 - Are they at risk?
 - Do you have any control over them?

Remember that older people and people with disabilities may be at particular risk.

Step 3

Consider the risks you have identified. Are the precautions already taken adequate to deal with the risks? If not, you must implement additional measures to control them.

Step 4

Record your findings if you have five or more employees.

Step 5

Regularly review the assessment. If any significant changes take place, make sure existing precautions and management arrangements are still adequate to deal with the risks.

Helpful Tips

- Prevent floors from getting wet or contaminated in the first place.
- Have procedures in place for both routine and responsive cleaning.
- If a spill does happen, clean it up quickly.
- If floors are left wet after cleaning, stop people from walking on them until they are dry.
- Look out for trip hazards, such as uneven floors or trailing cables, and encourage good housekeeping by your workers.
- Make sure employees wear footwear that is suitable for the environment they are working in.
- Make sure your flooring is suitable. If floors are likely to get wet, make sure they are of a type that does not become unduly slippery.

Case Study:

Scenario	Solution
An NHS trust recognised they had problems with slips and trips on wet hospital floors. In a two-year period, 100 members of staff had reported slips or trips on wet, recently cleaned floors.	<p>The HSE recommended a dry mopping system, using microfibre mops that reduce the amount of residue left on the floor during and after mopping. The staff was also advised to mop and dry the floor in sections before moving onto the next part of the ward to provide safe access around the area.</p> <p>Since the trust implemented the system, it has seen an 85 per cent reduction in slips and trips from those reported in the previous two years.</p>