

Ref No 9009 (v2)

Stopping Slips

Introduction

Slips and falls are one of the most common causes of non-fatal major injuries to employees in the manufacturing and service sectors. They also account for over half of all reported accidents to members of the public.

Slips and trips are a “priority area” in the Health and Safety Executives Revitalising Health and Safety programme.

All employers should assess and manage the risk workplace slips. Similarly, anyone who controls premises regularly visited by members of the public e.g. shops or leisure facilities needs to manage the slipping risk. Property owners have responsibilities to keep the common parts of offices or residential accommodation free from the risk of slipping.

Slips and trips can result in serious injuries and may lead to large compensation awards. Effective solutions are often simple, cheap and easy to implement.

What cause people to slip?

Slips result from some unintended or unexpected change in the contact between the feet and the ground or walking surface.

Research by the HSE has established that all of the following can contribute to the risk of slipping:

- Flooring
- Contamination
- Cleaning
- Footwear
- People and Behaviours

Not all for these may be available to control or influence. For example a shop owner will not be able to dictate what footwear is worn but should clean up spillages promptly and try to ensure that customers walk rather than run. Similarly many of

those in control of property will not have the opportunity to specify what flooring is installed but can try to minimise contamination and ensure that cleaning procedures are sufficient and suitably frequent to reduce the risk of slipping.

Flooring and Surfaces

New Surfaces:

- Specify non slip surfaces
- Ensure design is free from trip hazards

Existing Surfaces:

- Ensure they are kept in good order
- Establish suitable and sufficient cleaning regimes

Contamination

In many working environments contamination of the flooring can lead to a long term reduction in quality and increase the risk of slipping. The treading in of fat in kitchens, oil in garages or simple dirt and dust can reduce the slip resistance of the floor surface leading to an increased risk for employees.

Suitable cleaning procedures should be identified and established. Routine cleaning may deal with day to day spillages but “deep cleaning” using strong cleaning agents and mechanical equipment may be required at suitable intervals.

Cleaning

The slip resistance of flooring can be significantly reduced by spillages or ingress of water e.g. rain, ice or snow. Correct cleaning at frequent intervals is essential. The correct method of cleaning should be used e.g. wet mopping may leave a floor wet and slippery - it may be better to dry spillages using paper towels.

Footwear

Where employees face the risk of slipping e.g. in food manufacturing the use of special footwear may prove beneficial in reducing the risk. The most suitable footwear that provides good slip resistance should be identified and supplied to employees.

People and Behaviours

People may need to be managed or controlled to ensure that they do not adopt bad behaviours. Running can increase the risk of slipping and where possible pedestrians should be routed away from areas where the risk of slipping is greatest.

Access routes should be planned to avoid areas where slips are expected, ease overcrowding and reduce the temptation to rush/run.

Housekeeping

Good housekeeping is the first and the most important method of preventing falls due to slips and trips. It includes:

- Cleaning all spills immediately
- Marking spills and wet areas
- Mopping spillages or sweeping debris from floors
- Keep work areas and walking routes free of trip hazards

Without good housekeeping practices, any other preventive measures such as installation of sophisticated flooring or special footwear may never be fully effective.

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment should be undertaken to identify possible slip and trip hazards. The HSE's Slip Assessment tool provides invaluable guidance when carrying out an assessment. The following questions should help determine whether there is a hazard.

- Look for Slip and trip hazards
- Decide who might be harmed and how?

Consider the risks:

- Are there suitable controls in place?
If not, determine new/improved controls and implement them
- Is the floor surface:
 - In good condition?
 - Likely to become wet and slippery?
 - Dirty or contaminated?
- Are cleaning rotas:
 - Organised to avoid busy times e.g. when there may be members of the public present?
 - Focused on those periods where spillages might be most expected?
- Are cleaning procedures and the cleaning materials chosen to reduce risk of slippery surfaces?

The risk assessment should be recorded and reviewed on a regular basis,

Legislation

All employers have responsibilities to ensure the safety of their employees, and those not in their employment, under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 describes the duty to conduct a risk assessment and the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 set out the specific responsibilities in respect of ensuring a safe

workplace.

In addition, those in control of premises have duties under the Occupiers Liability Act 1984. This states (s2) that the occupier has a "common law duty of care" and then goes on to define that as:

"A duty to take such care as in the circumstance of the case is reasonable to see that the visitor will be reasonably safe in using the premises for the purposes for which he is invited or permitted by the occupier to be there."

This clearly extends to the control of slip and trip hazards.

Key Action Steps

If you have a responsibility for premises:

- Ensure that new flooring surfaces are installed so that they are, as far as is practicable, free from tripping and slipping hazards
- Conduct routine inspections to ensure all surfaces are free from slip and trip hazards.
- Ensure that routine maintenance is carried out to remedy defects
- Ensure that cleaning procedures are suitable for dealing with contamination, and spillages.
- Establish cleaning rotas and routines that are sufficiently frequent to deal with all expected problems
- Ensure cleaners are suitably trained in the best, most effective procedures
- Set up a programme to ensure that spills are identified/reported and cleaned up immediately

References

Preventing slips, trips and falls at work INDG 225
Workplace health, safety and welfare INDG 244

Slips and trips HSG115 ISBN 0 7176 1145 £7.50
Available from HSE Books
HSE Slips and Trips topic page:
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/slips/>

HSE Slip Assessment Tool
www.hse.gov.uk/slips/sat

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Aviva Risk Management Solutions operate a Risk Helpline during normal business hours for the cost of a local telephone call. The telephone number is:

0845 366 66 66

www.aviva.co.uk/risksolutions