



A Health and Safety Guide  
to preventing

## Slips and Trips

### Guidance for Managers

Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg  
This document is available in Welsh

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### Introduction

Slips and trips continue to be a common cause of accidents at work and can happen almost anywhere. On occasions they can result in a major injury serious enough to keep the individual away from work, sometimes for a considerable period of time, resulting in many days lost annually throughout the Council as a whole. As with other health and safety issues, a good management system will help you identify problem areas, decide what to do, put decisions into practice and check that your actions have worked.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provides detailed guidance on slips and trips on their website. This guidance will help you overcome the biggest barriers to preventing slips and trips by ensuring you:

- take the risks seriously;
- understand their causes;
- understand that they are not inevitable; and
- assess risk and apply management controls.

### Managing Health and Safety

The HSE recommends a 'Plan, Do, Check, Act' approach to managing health and safety.

#### **Plan**

Determine your policy/Plan for implementation.

#### **Do**

Profile risks/Organise for health and safety/Implement your plan.

#### **Check**

Measure performance (monitor before events, investigate after events).

#### **Act**

Review performance/Act on lessons learned.

Detailed guidance on this approach is provided in the HSE's document 'HSG 65: Managing for health and safety'.

## **Assessing Slip and Trip Risks**

The Council is required to assess risks to employees and others who may be affected by their work. This will assist the Council to find out what needs to be done to satisfy legal duties. There are no fixed rules about how a risk assessment should be carried out, but there are general principles that should be followed. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recommend a five-step approach.

**Step 1:** Look for hazards. Look around the workplace (including outdoor areas) for anything that may be a slip or trip hazard, such as poor floor surfaces, loose carpets, etc.

**Step 2:** Decide who might be harmed and how. Consider who will come into the workplace and whether they are at risk, for example, visitors who may have visual impairments.

**Step 3:** Evaluate the risks. Consider the precautions already taken and assess whether they adequately deal with the risks or whether more are required.

**Step 4:** Record your findings. See Appendix 1 for example risk assessments.

**Step 5:** Review assessments from time to time, and particularly after any accident. If there is any significant change you should review the risk assessment to make sure that precautions are still adequate.

## **Identifying Hazards**

Slip and trip accidents may have different causes, but often have the same result. By looking at the contributing factors separately, it is possible to work out more accurately the cause of a slip or trip accident.

Slips occur when the foot and floor surface cannot make effective contact/grip, usually caused when something has been spilt or when the shoe sole and floor are unsuited.

<b>Slip Hazards:</b>	Spills and splashes of liquids and solids
	Wet floor (following cleaning)
	Unsuitable footwear
	Loose mats on polished floors
	Rain, sleet and snow
	Change from wet to dry surface (footwear still wet)
	Unsuitable floor surface/covering
	Dusty floors
	Sloping surfaces

Trips occur when an obstruction prevents normal movement of the foot, resulting in a loss of balance, and are usually caused by objects on the floor, uneven surfaces or ill-fitting, inappropriate or damaged footwear.

<b>Trip Hazards:</b>	Loose floorboards/tiles
	Loose and worn mats/carpets
	Uneven surfaces
	Holes/cracks
	Changes in surface level – ramps, steps and stairs
	Cables across walking areas
	Obstructions
	Bumps, ridges and protruding nails, etc.
	Electrical and telephone socket outlets
<b>Factors which increase risk:</b>	Organisation of walkways
	Badly placed mirrors/reflections from glazing
	Poor or unsuitable lighting
	Wrong cleaning regime/materials
	Moving goods/carrying/pushing or pulling a load
	Rushing
	Distractions/fatigue
	Effects of drugs or alcohol
	Shadows

## **Managing Risks**

There are many simple measures that can be taken to eliminate or reduce risks. See Appendix 2 for example risk controls.

### **Good Housekeeping**

Get workplace conditions right in the first place. It will make tackling slip and trip risks easier. Choose the right floor surfaces and suitable lighting, properly plan pedestrian and traffic routes and avoid overcrowding.

Good housekeeping is important in preventing hazards and applies as much to offices as it does to workshops, building sites, residential homes, etc. Keep work areas tidy. This will create a better working environment and result in fewer accidents. Management has a responsibility to monitor workplace conditions and to ensure that housekeeping is to a high standard at all times.

Employees should be properly trained, particularly in the correct use of any safety and cleaning equipment provided, and clearly state who is responsible for what; this will help to minimise risks.

Ensure that cleaning methods and equipment are suitable for the type of surface being treated. This depends on several factors, such as the type of use and location and should have been identified in the risk assessment. If a flooring is of a type that becomes slippery when wet, avoid using wet cleaning techniques where possible.

Take care not to create additional slip and trip risks, for example, from residues not properly removed from the surface, vacuum cleaners not plugged into the nearest socket increasing the length of the cable trailing along the floor, buckets left in the middle of a corridor/walkway, etc.

A proper programme of maintenance will ensure that the steps you have taken remain effective. Necessary maintenance and repairs must be carried out. You may need to get help from the Council's Corporate Maintenance team.

While cleaning and maintenance work is being carried out, take care to avoid creating new hazards. Barrier off wet surfaces until dry, take care with trailing leads from cleaning equipment and if possible carry out cleaning and maintenance during quieter hours. Battery powered equipment, that does not present the hazards associated with trailing cables, is also available and may be of use in certain circumstances.

A good system of maintenance ensures that:

- maintenance (including inspection, testing, adjustment and cleaning) is carried out at suitable intervals;
- dangerous defects are corrected and access to faulty equipment or hazardous areas is prevented in the meantime;
- suitable records are kept so that the system can be monitored.

## **Lighting**

Lighting should be sufficient to enable people to see obstructions on floors, potentially slippery areas, etc., so they can work safely. Some areas may become dark and/or cast shadows that make the area hazardous. Replace, repair or clean lights before lighting levels become insufficient for safe working.

Arrange lighting and light fittings so they do not create dazzling light or glare that can make it difficult to see. Ensure light levels are not reduced, for example, by goods stacked in such a way as to block light or cast shadows.

Local lighting should always be provided at staircases and changes of level; it is usually also needed at ramps where there is no change in colour, texture or flooring material from level walkway to ramp.

## **Entrances**

The entrance to a building is an important area for controlling slip risk by preventing water being walked on to potentially slippery flooring inside. The entrance area consists of the external floor surface, any canopy present, the door, the matting and the floor immediately inside the entrance.

Assess the entrance area on a rainy day to see if any water is being walked into the building and, if so, how much.

Ensure any surface water drainage channels/drains in the vicinity are not blocked, to prevent water pooling.

Entrance matting can play an important part in removing water from people's footwear. Ensure it is large enough, made of a suitable material and is kept in good condition and replaced when necessary.

## **Flooring**

Poor floor conditions are a major cause of slips and trips. Regular checks should be made for loose floor finishes, holes and cracks in surfaces, loose and worn-out rugs and mats, etc. Even a good surface will become dangerous in certain conditions, for example, if liquids are spilt onto it. Ideally, working practices and machinery should be arranged to prevent spills.

However, where spills do occur they should be cleaned up immediately or the area coned off and warning signs displayed to make people aware until they can be cleaned up. When cleaning up a spill, do not spread it across the floor, but rather dry it with an absorbent material, such as paper towel.

Where floors are unavoidably wet or dusty through work activity, take special care in the choice of floor coverings or floor surface.

In addition to wet contaminants, such as rainwater, spillages of liquids, etc., other contaminants can act as a lubricant between a floor surface and an individual's foot or footwear, such as spilled food, or oil, grease, dust, powder, etc.

It is therefore important to identify the contaminants that are likely to be present in the workplace, understand where they come from, consider their influence on slip risk and implement control measures to deal with the risk.

## **Stairs and Steps**

A slip or trip on stairs or steps, particularly in descent, can lead to a fall resulting in serious injury or death and it is therefore important that they are maintained in a good condition and are well lit.

They should be inspected regularly, and any defects reported for action.

Particular attention should be paid to treads and any carpet/tiles fitted to them, any handrails, and for visually impaired people it is important that highlighting (e.g., colour contrasting) to nosings (the front edges of the treads) is clearly visible.

## **Obstructions**

Failure to tidy up properly and objects left on walkways can easily go unnoticed and cause a trip. Where it is not possible to remove obstacles, take precautions to reduce the risk of accidents by preventing access, or warning people of the dangers, for example, by using warning signs.

## **Footwear**

While much can be done to reduce hazards, occasionally there will be some remaining risk. An important second line of defence will be to ensure people have the right footwear. Footwear should:

- be appropriate for the task and floor surfaces, taking into consideration environments where floor surface contamination is more likely to occur and where footwear may need to be more slip resistant;
- fit properly, with soles in good condition and be maintained or renewed as necessary;
- managers should monitor the condition of footwear and that the correct footwear is being worn by staff, as necessary.

The Council has a duty to provide, free of charge, all necessary personal protective equipment, including safety footwear (if identified as necessary through a risk assessment).

## **Supervision and Information**

You don't have much control over who visits you or their type of footwear, so you must do everything reasonably practicable to make their visit safe. If children are frequent visitors, remember that they may not be properly supervised, so employees must be more vigilant and ask parents to take more control if necessary. The elderly and people with disabilities must also be considered. Numerous mats and changes in floor surfaces can all be trip hazards to those who shuffle their feet rather than pick them up. Notices, if displayed, should be clear, unobstructed and at a height suitable to those who will be expected to read them. Notices may also include pictures. Review your accident/incident statistics to determine high risk locations.

## **How you can raise your employees' awareness of slips, trips and falls**

As a manager you are able to influence the behaviour of your employees. This can be achieved by:

- giving guidance, advice, information and instruction to your employees on identifying hazards, likely hazards and how to control the risks;
- promoting a slip and trip safety culture and encourage everyone to take these types of accidents seriously; and
- developing innovative ways of communicating what are often common-sense messages. Make it interesting and explain the pros and cons. Encourage your employees to become involved. See Appendix 3 for employee information.



## Slips and Trips - Basic Checklist for Managers

		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>1</b>	Have you considered slip, trip or falls as a significant cause of injury?		
<b>2</b>	Have you identified all slip, trip or fall hazards in your workplace?		
<b>3</b>	Have you evaluated the risks from slips, trips and falls and considered what control measures are required?		
<b>4</b>	Have you prioritised your actions, focusing on areas or locations of highest risk?		
<b>5</b>	Have you implemented the required control measures?		
<b>6</b>	Have appropriate working practices and procedures been established, documented and used in the provision of information, instruction and training of employees?		

If you have answered **NO** to any of the above, you need to take some action. If you have answered **YES** – keep an eye on things and make revisions as and when necessary.

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### Appendix 1 - Rhondda Cynon Taf Council – Risk Assessment Form

RA Ref: 012345		<b>Work Activity Risk Assessment</b>				<b>Form RA/03</b>	
Assessment Date:		01/08/2023	Work Activity being assessed:  Cleaning of floors			Assessors:  Joe Bloggs - Supervisor	
Review Date:		01/08/2024					
Item No.	Main Hazards <small>(something with the potential to cause harm)</small>	Risk [H,M,L]	Reason <small>(Explain the reasons why you have decided on either a H,M,L risk rating in the previous column. Include the person(s) at risk and the seriousness of the injuries they may sustain)</small>	Current Control Measures <small>(What are you doing already to control the hazard and risk? These controls must be in place and working effectively)</small>	Residual Risk [H,M,L]	Further Action Required	
						Yes	No
1	<p>General periodic cleaning of floors by cleaning staff, which could result in a floor becoming slippery due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being wet;</li> <li>• unsuitable cleaning materials for the type of floor;</li> <li>• residues from other cleaning materials (e.g., polish)</li> </ul>	M	<p>Cleaning staff, other employees (including visiting employees) and visitors (including employees of other employers, contractors and members of the public) could all be at risk from the hazards.</p> <p>Possible injuries are likely to vary from minor bruises to fractures.</p>	Cleaning staff wear appropriate footwear and put out 'slippery when wet' signs after cleaning floors.	M	✓	

	<p>or trip hazards could be introduced during the cleaning process, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• buckets, mops or similar being left on the floor where someone could easily trip over them;</li> <li>• electrical cables from vacuum cleaners or similar trailing along the floor.</li> </ul>						
2	<p>Cleaning of a spillage of wet or dry substances, which could have resulted in a floor becoming slippery.</p>	M	<p>Employees (including visiting employees) and visitors (including employees of other employers, contractors and members of the public) could all be at risk from the hazards.</p> <p>Possible injuries are likely to vary from minor bruises to fractures.</p>	<p>Nothing specific in place, just an assumption that employees will clear up any spillages they are responsible for or notice.</p>	M	✓	



2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• electrical cables from vacuum cleaners or similar trailing along the floor.</li> </ul> <p>Cleaning of a spillage of wet or dry substances, which could have resulted in a floor becoming slippery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure any residues are properly removed from the floor surface;</li> <li>• ensure footwear, particularly soles, remain in good condition;</li> <li>• ensure buckets, mops or similar are not left in the middle of corridors/walkways;</li> <li>• plug vacuum cleaners or similar equipment into the nearest electrical socket so as to reduce the length of the cable trailing along the floor;</li> <li>• use battery operated equipment if possible;</li> <li>• be mindful of your position in relation to cables, cleaning equipment.</li> </ul> <p>Managers to provide instruction and information to employees with regards to the following measures to be taken if they are responsible for a spillage or if they notice one that hasn't been cleaned up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• they should clean up the spillage immediately or, if this is not practicable, cone off the area and display warning signs to make people aware until the spillage can be cleaned up;</li> </ul>	<p>On induction for any new employee, and periodically as a refresher</p> <p>Immediately</p>	<p>Relevant managers</p> <p>All employees</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• similarly, cone off the area and display warning signs if the floor remains wet after the spillage has been cleaned up;</li> <li>• when cleaning up a spill, do not spread it across the floor, but rather, where possible, dry it with an absorbent material, such as paper towel;</li> <li>• If a spillage is greasy, make sure a suitable cleaning agent is used.</li> </ul> <p>Managers should consider if it would be of benefit to produce a short poster outlining the above actions an employee should take if they are responsible for/notice a spillage, and display the poster in appropriate locations about the workplace, particularly where spillages are more likely, such as kitchen areas.</p>	<p>If it is determined it would be of benefit to do so, within a reasonable period afterwards</p>	<p>Relevant managers</p>	<p>Enter date of display of poster</p>
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### Appendix 2 - Slip and Trip Risk Controls

Area	Practical Measures to Prevent Slips and Trips
<b>External steps, paths and parking areas</b>	<p>Suitable lighting – replace, repair or clean light before levels become too low to be safe.</p> <p>Ensure paving slabs are secure and tarmac paths are in good condition to give a flat even surface.</p> <p>Maintain parking areas so they are free of potholes.</p> <p>Mark the nosing of steps with anti-slip coating, since smooth, gloss paint will make the surface slippery under wet conditions.</p> <p>Provide handrails where appropriate and maintain in good condition.</p> <p>Discourage short cuts across grassed / muddy areas.</p> <p>Clean and remove leaves, mud and detritus from surfaces.</p> <p>Put in place effective procedures to deal with snow and ice.</p>
<b>Building entrances / exits</b>	<p>Ensure any surface water drainage channels / drains in the vicinity are not blocked, to prevent water pooling.</p> <p>Provide suitable non-slip, water-absorbing mats at the entrance (if appropriate) and maintain in good condition.</p> <p>Ensure temporary mats do not pose additional hazards.</p> <p>Display signs warning of hidden steps, changes of level and slippery surfaces, where appropriate.</p>



## Appendix 2 (continued) - Slip and Trip Risk Controls

Area	Practical Measures to Prevent Slips and Trips
<b>Sports halls</b>	<p>Avoid over-polishing of floor surface.</p> <p>Ensure suitable footwear is worn.</p> <p>Maintain floor mats in good condition and ensure they remain flat.</p> <p>Keep smooth floors clean and completely free of wet or dusty contamination.</p>
<b>Changing rooms / swimming pools</b>	<p>Avoid contamination of the floor surface with mud / water.</p> <p>Provide non-slip tiling on floor surfaces. Ensure specialist anti-slip tiles / surfaces are sourced and specified correctly. Contact Corporate Maintenance for advice.</p> <p>Provide drainage mats or grids in shower areas.</p>
<b>Internal stairs and corridors</b>	<p>Mark nosings of steps using anti-slip coating, since smooth, gloss paint will make the surface slippery under wet conditions. Provide handrails. Contact Corporate Maintenance for Advice.</p> <p>Replace, repair or clean lights before levels become too low to be safe.</p> <p>Apply appropriate anti-slip coatings to areas of smooth flooring which may become wet. Contact Corporate Maintenance for advice, if necessary.</p>

## Appendix 2 (continued) - Slip and Trip Risk Controls

<b>Area</b>	<b>Practical Measures to Prevent Slips and Trips</b>
<b>Storage areas</b>	<p>Provide appropriate types of storage units for goods and equipment.</p> <p>Keep containers of bulk liquids in banded areas (Refer to Hazard Data sheet).</p> <p>Where appropriate, keep storage areas locked and prevent access to unauthorised persons.</p>
<b>Kitchens</b>	<p>Provide suitable equipment to avoid spillages (from cooking, washing etc).</p> <p>Provide edged work surfaces to contain spillages (if appropriate).</p> <p>Ensure good ventilation to avoid smoke / steam and condensation.</p> <p>Ensure employees wear suitable footwear, with soles in good condition and not worn, etc.</p> <p>Clean spillages and pick up food contamination immediately.</p> <p>Dry floors after cleaning and ensure good housekeeping around bins.</p> <p>Provide suitable floor surface (contact Corporate Maintenance for advice).</p> <p>Clean floors with products appropriate for surface.</p> <p>Display suitable warning signs while cleaning is in progress.</p> <p>Remove warning signs when cleaning / drying is complete.</p>

## Appendix 2 (continued) - Slip and Trip Risk Controls

<b>Area</b>	<b>Practical Measures to Prevent Slips and Trips</b>
<b>Canteen Areas</b>	<p>Ensure employees wear suitable footwear.</p> <p>Clean spillages immediately.</p> <p>Use safe cleaning methods.</p> <p>Provide suitable floor surface (contact Corporate Maintenance for advice).</p> <p>Clean floors when users have left.</p> <p>Display suitable warning signs while cleaning is in progress.</p> <p>Remove warning signs when cleaning/drying is complete.</p>
<b>Offices</b>	<p>Avoid trailing cables and leads.</p> <p>Provide adequate storage.</p> <p>Avoid storage of materials on floor.</p> <p>Ensure good housekeeping.</p> <p>Replace damaged or worn tiles.</p> <p>Provide secure storage for bags, coats, etc.</p>

### Appendix 3 – Avoiding Slips and Trips – Information for Employees

- Pay attention to where you are going.
- Wear appropriate footwear for the work activity and replace when necessary.
- Avoid taking shortcuts, especially at night.
- Be sure to change direction slowly, as rapid changes in direction can cause slips and trips.
- Use extra caution when walking across smooth floors that have been waxed or may be icy. Take slow short steps.
- Watch out for hidden steps. Sometimes when walking through a doorway, there may be a drop or rise of several inches that may not be obvious.
- Do not carry materials that may obstruct your vision or that may be too heavy for you to carry safely.
- Use handrails whenever walking up or down stairs or ramps.
- Turn the light on first when you walk into a dark room, even if you stay for only a moment.
- If you see debris lying on the floor, don't ignore it, pick it up!
- If you are responsible for a spillage or notice one, clean it up immediately.
- If you are working in the community and see a slip or trip hazard on the highway or at a client's property, report it to your supervisor. You can do this verbally or via the Council's Hazard Reporting Scheme.

### **Appendix 4 – Further Information Available from the Health and Safety Executive and the Corporate Health and Safety Team**

#### **Health and Safety Executive**

- Slips and trips webpage
- STEP: Slips, trips and falls online eLearning package
- Preventing slips and trips at work (INDG 225)
- Slips and trips: Catering and hospitality webpage
- Preventing slips and trips in kitchens and food service (Catering Information Sheet CAIS6)
- Slips and trips in education webpage
- Slips and trips in health and social care webpage

#### **Corporate Health and Safety Team**

- Snow and Ice Management – A Guide for Site Managers and Head Teachers
- Head Teachers' Guide to Health and Safety in Primary Schools
- Registered Managers' Guide to Health and Safety in Residential Care Homes
- Registered Managers' Guide to Health and Safety in Residential Children's Homes
- Site and Building Managers' Guide to Health and Safety in Day Centres
- Site and Building Managers' Guide to Health and Safety in Leisure Centres
- Site and Building Managers' Guide to Health and Safety in Offices
- Primary Schools Health and Safety Inspection Guidance
- School Caretaker Health and Safety Handbook

