

6.3 Preventing trips: Walkways, highlighting trip hazards



In order to reduce the risk of people tripping over permanent hazards or ones known to be in need of repair, they need to be clearly highlighted.

Introduction

While every effort should be made to remove trip hazards, many environments will have permanent ones both indoors and outside. Usually, these result from architectural or historic design features of the buildings, including kerbs and single steps. In many cases, it may be appropriate to highlight these hazards by using appropriate lighting, or appropriate 'Light Reflectance Value (LRV) contrast'. Light Reflectance Value is a measure of contrast of surfaces when illuminated by light (see [module 5.3, Preventing slips: Environment](#)).

Best practice

These include:

- **Identify all permanent and fixed trip hazards** including those outside the premises as well as inside.
- **Highlight permanent trip hazards and those awaiting repair.**
- **Ensure that the hazard is highlighted appropriately** providing at least 30 LRV contrast with surrounding materials. LRV contrast can be achieved in a wide variety of colours and materials, it does not have to be an unsightly bright yellow paint. LRV can be assessed with a handheld meter. Many paints and highlight materials (e.g. stair nosings) have their LRV in the product description.

- **Ensure that the highlight draws attention** to the entire raised area presenting a trip hazard, not just a small section of it or an area in the vicinity of it. The highlight should be thought of as a target that people need to be aware of so they can step over it safely. In the case of a single step for example, the highlight should be along the entire step nosing (see [module 7.0, Preventing falls on steps and stairs](#)).
- **Ensure that lighting levels around the hazard are sufficient** for it to be clearly visible (at least 50 lux).



A single step with clear nosing highlight

Challenges for historic properties

An historic property can have considerable variation in its design, age and present or former function. As such, they are more likely to have trip hazards underfoot than a modern building and in many cases, there will be limited scope for removing them. Frequently, this will be because this may affect the historic fabric of the building.

In addition to this, many public areas are more likely to be accessed by visitors who are at greater risk of tripping (e.g. elderly people).

Other possible solutions

These include:

- Prioritise the highest risks and determine the timescale for fixing each one.
- Manage visitor access routes away from significant trip hazards.
- Highlight trip hazards clearly (as set out above).
- Stain wooden trip hazards a lighter or darker tone (depending on their surroundings).
- Use a contrasting stone on the nosings of stone steps taking account of any relevant conservation requirements.
- Paint or fix a highlight in an attractive colour that provides suitable LRV contrast. For example, using the main colours from an attraction sign or logo as a highlight colour where suitable.
- On single steps and short flights a handrail may not be a legal requirement, but installing one will provide a means of fall arrest and will give a visual cue, at eye level, that there is a hazard underfoot. This complements an appropriate nosing highlight.
- Provide and maintain appropriate levels of lighting (as set out above).

Need to contact us?

For further advice Ecclesiastical customers can call our Risk Management Department on **01 619 0300** (Monday to Friday 09:00 to 17:00, excluding Bank Holidays)



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