

Slips and trips



Slips and trips are the most common causes of injury in many workplaces. Whilst most of these are minor, others can be quite severe and in some cases are disabling.

Slip and trip hazards are not only present inside premises themselves, but are common outside them too – in grounds, car parks and other external areas.

Most slips occur in wet or contaminated conditions, frequently as a result of weather conditions or spillages. Commonly, trips are caused by worn paths, steps or floor coverings and where electricity cables trail across the floor.

Legal requirements

If you are an employer you must comply with the general requirements of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations. More specifically, you must also comply with the Safety Health and Welfare at Work General Application Regulations. You will also need to comply with these if you have control of premises used as workplace. The term 'workplace' is very broad.

In relation to slips and trips, the regulations require that workplaces:

- are kept clean, properly maintained and well lit
- permit safe access
- have floors capable of being kept clean
- have floors, paths etc. which are free from obstructions and substances liable to cause someone to slip or trip; that have no holes or adverse slopes; are even and are not slippery; and have adequate drainage where necessary.

Beyond this, you also need to meet your common-law duty of care, ensuring that your premises do not cause injury to another because you have acted negligently.

Hazards to look out for

Internal

- Loose, worn, frayed or unfixed carpets, rugs, mats and other floor coverings
- Loose, damaged and uneven tiles, stone paving, flagstones and floorboards
- Variations in the level of floors (e.g. ramps) or stairs (e.g. irregular steps)
- 'Slippery' floor materials and coverings
- Worn, steep and uneven steps and stairs
- Inadequate lighting, particularly on steps and stairs
- Lack of or inadequate handrails on steps and stairs
- Trailing electrical leads and other obstructions
- Cleaning activity, making floors more slippery (e.g. wet mopping or use of polishes)
- Wet or contaminated floors from poor maintenance of the building (e.g. leaking roofs)
- Spillages of food or drink, particularly in kitchen areas
- Walk-in contaminants from adverse weather (e.g. mud, rainwater)

External

- Uneven footpaths
- Damaged paving stones and slabs
- Damaged or worn steps
- Potholes
- Unprotected drops
- Protruding tree roots and undergrowth particularly on footpaths or other access routes
- Poor drainage of footpaths
- Growth of algae or moss on pathways
- Accumulations of wet leaves or loose materials
- Inadequate lighting, particularly on steps and stairs
- Lack of or inadequate handrails on steps and stairs
- Adverse weather making footpaths, steps etc. unsafe (e.g. rain, snow and ice).

Precautions you can take

Typical precautions include:

- Regular inspection maintenance and repair of floor surfaces, steps and footpaths
- Replacing or repairing cracked or damaged flooring
- Removing or replacing worn, damaged or loose floor coverings (e.g. carpets, mats and rugs)
- Fixing down carpets and entrance matting securely
- Regular maintenance and repair of roofs, ceilings and guttering
- Repairing potholes or uneven surfaces in paths, driveways, car parks and steps
- Highlighting unexpected changes or variations in floor levels, steps or stairs
- Providing adequate or enhanced lighting
- Providing steps, stairs and steep paths with suitable handrails
- Avoiding or covering trailing electric leads, footpaths and walkways
- Removing stored furniture and other obstructions from footpaths and walkways
- Regular cleaning of floors and coverings
- Making access safe until proper repairs can be carried out
- Providing barriers and warning signs where cleaning is or has taken place
- Providing entrance matting
- Providing adequate barriers and warnings where there are unprotected drops
- Regular maintenance and proper repair of external drainage
- Removing protruding tree roots and undergrowth where these are obstructing access
- Removing algae, moss or accumulations of leaves on external footpaths
- Gritting footpaths where snow or ice is forecast and removing snowfall where this occurs
- Providing and using appropriate footwear for employees.

Making a start

ACTION	GUIDANCE
<p>1. Carry out a thorough inspection of your premises to identify slip or trip hazards.</p> <p>Remember to include outside areas for which you are responsible in your inspection where you have them (e.g. a car park).</p> <p>Make a note of the hazards you have identified.</p>	<p>You can use the hazard lists above to help you identify these.</p> <p>Where you are an employer you will need to complete formal risk assessments. These should identify slip and trip hazards for you. Again, you can use the hazards and precautions lists above to help you with these.</p> <p>You must consider all those who may be harmed, including members of the public (e.g. customers, other visitors etc.), and to consider any additional measures that may be required for the elderly, those who are infirm and those with a disability. In most circumstances, assessments should be recorded, reviewed and updated (as necessary).</p> <p>Risk assessments must be completed by someone who is competent. If using a health and safety consultant, check if they hold a recognised health and safety qualification and ensure they are experienced in the field of service you require.</p> <p>Where the slip resistance of flooring is a specific issue consider a more detailed assessment using the HSE's Slips Assessment Tool (SAT) available at www.hse.gov.uk/slips/sat/index.htm.</p>
<p>2. Check that the precautions you have in place are adequate. If they are not, identify any additional ones that are needed.</p> <p>Make a note of these and who will be responsible for taking any action.</p>	<p>Typical precautions are set out above. You can use this list to help decide if any further precautions are necessary. These will vary depending on your particular circumstances.</p> <p>Formal risk assessments should check the adequacy of any existing precautions, noting anything further that needs to be done.</p>
<p>3. Make periodic checks to ensure that floors, coverings, steps and pathways remain in good condition, free from obstruction and that any precautions (such as, lighting) remain adequate.</p> <p>Make a note of the checks you make, any issues identified and actions taken.</p>	<p>You may need to complete more frequent checks before or during events and where the weather is inclement or becomes more seasonal.</p> <p>You will also need to consider how any defects that are identified are going to be put right. If this can't be done immediately and they present a significant danger, you will need to provide additional precautions to guard against this. This may be in the form of barriers, coverings, warning signs etc.</p> <p>It is important that you keep records of any periodic checks that you make and any reports of defects identified, including any actions you take to rectify them.</p>
<p>4. Ensure that employees and volunteers are aware of the precautions required to prevent slips and trips.</p> <p>Make a note of any information or training that is provided to individuals.</p>	<p>The level of information and training required will vary depending on the nature of the work and your particular circumstances. If you have completed formal risk assessments, these will help you determine what is necessary.</p> <p>In particular, you may want to advise employees and volunteers how to report any hazards they come across.</p> <p>You should keep records of any information or training you provide. These should contain detail relating to the persons who were trained</p>

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	(including their signatures to say that they have received and understood the training); when they were trained and by whom; an overview of the training that was provided etc.
<p>5. Document your arrangements and responsibilities for preventing slips and trips.</p> <p>Review these where necessary, particularly if you suspect that they are no longer valid</p> <p>Keep the notes you have made in steps outlined above.</p>	<p>If you need to prepare a Safety Statement, you could record your arrangements as part of it.</p> <p>In the event of a claim, paperwork will be important. So, where there is a risk of slips and trips, you should retain the records mentioned.</p>

Want to know more?

Other useful health and safety information is available on our [website](#).

Further guidance and resources are also available at: www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/slips_trips_falls/.

Need to contact us?

For further advice, Ecclesiastical customers can call our Risk Management Team on **01619 0300** (Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm, excluding bank holidays)

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