

Slips and trips



Slips and trips are one of the leading causes of injuries at work, and for each (non-fatal) case an average of 8.8 working days are lost.*

*<https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/lfs/>

Slips and trips can also result in other types of serious accidents, such as falls from height and, whilst few are fatal, many are significant and lead to prolonged and in some cases permanent disablement. Compensation payments ordered by courts, fines and other costs can be substantial, whereas the solutions to prevent slips and trips are often simple and cost quite little.

Common causes of slips and trips in the workplace include floors that are uneven, unsuitably covered or wet, steps and slopes, trailing cables, poor lighting and inadequate housekeeping.

Key actions for preventing slips and trips

Make sure employees are aware of their responsibility to protect people's wellbeing at work, not just the employer. They must prevent hazards and maintain control measures in place by carrying out and/or co-operating with risk assessments.

Preventing slip hazards

- Use drip trays when working with liquids to prevent spilling; use lids and fill-lines on containers, and put up screens to stop splashes and overspray when using hoses. Train all users, particularly in the use of slings.
- Clean after hours to minimise slip risks from wet floors. If this isn't possible, restrict access to the area.
- Install floors that are made of materials designed to reduce slipping and only use cleaning equipment designed for that material, so you don't wear down the anti-slip quality.
- Use the right cleaning materials for the type of floor, put up wet floor signs and let floors air dry or use a dry mop to speed up drying time.
- Wear non-slip footwear appropriate for the work activities and other hazards present.

- Clean up spills immediately – if a chemical is spilled (that you can't handle), get someone qualified to sort it as soon as possible.
- Use anti-slip tape, mats, covers, and grating to prevent any area from becoming slippery and posing a risk to workers and visitors, particularly around entrances, exits and stairways.
- Ensure in colder seasons paths are well lit, cleared of leaves, snow, and ice regularly, and have good drainage.

Preventing trip hazards

- Avoid single steps and sudden changes in floor level when designing premises, but if that's not possible, clearly highlight them with signage.
- Ensure there are numerous plug sockets so cables don't need to be trailed across the floor.
- Plug in equipment as close to where it needs to be as possible. For stationary equipment, if trailing cables can't be avoided, use cable tidies and cover strips.
- Carpeting and other flooring materials should be installed properly so there are no bumps or areas that are not level.
- Report areas where mats, carpeting or lino/laminate has worn down and become uneven or has edges that are starting to curl or fray.
- Keep equipment in suitable storage spaces, clear obstacles away from walkways and stairways, and dispose of/recycle rubbish on the premises.
- Organise work activities so that there isn't any rushing or overcrowding, ensure employees know how to use equipment safely, and restrict access to areas where temporary trailing cables are unavoidable.
- Make sure that employees use proper manual handling techniques and that manual handling activities are organised to ensure safety. A person carrying a load may not see an obstacle and could seriously injure themselves by tripping over it and/or dropping the load as they fall.
- Install good artificial lighting where there might not be enough natural lighting that allows people to see and avoid hazards on the ground.