

Slips, Trips and Falls Guidance



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1.0	July 2024	This guidance supersedes all other departmental and Council documents on the same subject	H Williamson – HSW Consultant

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to give advice and guidance on preventing slips, trips and falls and to reduce the risk of injury or damage to equipment from such incidents and aid in the prevention of employees being absent due to slips, trips and fall injuries.

Providing a safe and suitable working environment can improve the physical and mental wellbeing of employees, and for the Council, it can help to maintain effectiveness and efficiency and reduce the cost of absenteeism. Additionally, having a culture that promotes employee safety and wellbeing can lead to increased job satisfaction, employee engagement, and employee retention.

Scope

This guidance applies to all Derbyshire County Council employees, contractors working for the Council and volunteers using Council premises or sites

This guidance has been produced as part of the Council's health and safety arrangements. Whilst recognising that some departments/services will have specialist requirements over and above this guidance which necessitate additional specialist arrangements, it sets out the minimum health and safety requirements required across all departments to ensure the Council can implement the stated aims of its Safety Policy and comply with its Statutory Requirements. All managers and employees should therefore make themselves familiar with the requirements of this guidance and ensure they are followed

Note: This guidance does not cover falls from height, which are covered under a separate document.



Introduction

The Council has a legal duty under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of its employees.

The Council wants to ensure that it provides a safe working environment free from slip, trip and falls by ensuring that potential hazards in the workplace are identified, risk assessed and managed.

This guidance describes the procedures which should be followed and the factors which should be considered by all employees when dealing with aspects of slips, trips and falls in the workplace.

Roles and Responsibilities

Corporate Management Team (CMT)

- Will ensure that sufficient resources are provided to ensure compliance with this document regarding slips, trips and falls.

Departmental Senior Management Team (SMT)

- Will ensure that sufficient resources are provided to ensure compliance with this document, tailored to the specific requirements of their department.
- Will ensure a programme of workplace inspections are implemented and maintained.

Head of Service (HoS)

- Will ensure Line Managers undertake a programme of workplace inspections.
- Will ensure suitable and sufficient resources are provided to comply with the requirements of this document.
- Upon request, will provide local Union Safety Representatives with all information, including risk assessments.

Line Manager

- Is responsible for ensuring their employees read, understand, and adhere to this guidance and related documents.
- Will ensure regular checks of the workplace are undertaken to identify any slip, trip, fall issues.
- Identify any potential slip, trip or fall related hazards within their areas of responsibility or control.
- Undertake any required risk assessments where a significant risk of a slip trip or fall accident exists.
- Ensure all employees (and others who may be affected) are made aware of and abide by the control measures identified in the risk assessment.
- Immediately implement measures to control any identified risks.

- Cease any activities where a significant risk of serious injury from a slip, trip or fall cannot be effectively controlled, escalating any such risks for which the controls cannot be immediately implemented.
- Promptly take out of use any area that is not safe or suitable for purpose due to the risk of a slip trip or fall incident.
- Implement any actions identified from slips trips or falls incidents.
- Regularly review accidents and near miss records to identify any specific trends or areas where slips, trips falls are occurring and put in place suitable mitigations.
- Ensure all items are stored in designated areas.
- Raise awareness in relation to the management of slips, trips, and falls.
- Identify training requirements across their area and ensure that employees complete any required training.
- For those employees unable to access this document electronically, print off a hard copy of this guidance and any relevant hyperlinks.

Employees

- All employees have a responsibility to abide by this procedure and any safe systems of work or risk assessment control measures arising from the implementation of it. Any significant slip and trip hazards that they become aware of should be reported to their manager. Employees should also take steps to reduce risks so far as is reasonably practicable, such as keeping all areas tidy and removing any obvious trip hazards. All incidents involving slips, trips or falls must be reported on the incident reporting system.

Non-employee/Volunteer

- Non-employees have no specific duties, but the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act do apply, in the interests of health, safety and welfare.

Contractor

- Will make proper use of any control measures, follow safe systems of work, abide by local rules, and report any defects or potentially dangerous circumstances to the Manager of the premises.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing Function (HSW)

- Will provide advice and assistance where necessary.
 - Offer support, advice and guidance to managers carrying out risk assessments.
 - Seek assistance from specialist organisations when necessary.
 - Monitor the effectiveness of this document.
 - The Occupational Health Team will provide appropriate support and advice.
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Arrangements

Definitions/Terminology

Slip: the foot moves inadvertently, usually making the person unstable and often causing the person to fall.

Trip: a trip is caused during motion (e.g. walking or running) when the foot is suddenly stopped from moving, but the body continues on in its motion. Trips are generally caused by an obstruction of some kind, such as a torn carpet or a trailing cable.

Fall: a fall is often the result of losing balance following a slip or trip but can also be the result of falling into a pit or hole in the floor, due to inadequate protection around a hole or falling from a height.

Identifying the Hazards of Slips, Trips and Falls

There are number of reasons why slip and trip accidents happen. The potential for a slip to happen is where the surface of the floor is not as the person using it, expects it to be.

The cause of trips is usually where an unexpected obstruction is present, or where there are uneven surfaces. Often the causes of slips and trips involve poor housekeeping, lack of care when completing a familiar task, poor maintenance of floor and traffic route condition, poor lighting, environmental factors or poor layout of the workplace.

Causes of Slips and Trips:-

Surface conditions

- uneven surfaces with no warning signs
- wet or waxed floors
- potholes in walkways and car parks
- a spillage which hasn't been cleaned up, barriered and signed
- ice which hasn't been gritted or salted
- surface not cleaned correctly
- contaminants on external walkways such as leaves, mud, moss.

Environmental conditions

- poor housekeeping and storage issues
- rubbish which hasn't been cleared away
- inadequate lighting
- electrical cables which haven't been taped down
- transition from one surface type to another
- wearing inadequate footwear
- coats hanging on the back of chairs
- unmarked or unexpected changes in level

Changes in level including stairs

- No handrail present or people not using the handrail
- Stair / step edges not highlighted.
- Changes in level not marked / highlighted

Identifying Slip Hazards

Situations that can cause slip hazards include areas where:

- spills occur - such as canteens or break out areas
- loose floor coverings may be used - for example mats on polished wooden floors
- water or other contaminants may be on the floor e.g. near doorways
- toilets, washrooms and shower rooms
- people are expected to walk where water, wet leaves or moss or snow may collect, or ice may form e.g. car park areas or on external pathways
- cleaning processes may, even if only for a short time, leave wet or slippery areas
- poor visibility is caused by inadequate or defective lighting or glare from sunlight on shiny flooring
- inappropriate or incorrectly selected floor surfaces or cleaning processes.
- poorly maintained equipment, increasing the likelihood of spills or leaks
- inappropriate footwear

Identifying Trip Hazards

Trip hazards are caused by an obstruction in the path of someone walking (or running). In some cases, the obstruction is not unknown, but has simply been forgotten about, or it changes in some way e.g., a loose cable develops a loop.

Items that are most likely to cause a trip hazard include:

- unevenness in flooring – holes and loose flooring, etc.
- worn or torn floor coverings, protruding nails or floor fixings, or floor coverings where the edges have become unfixed and loose
- unsecured cables or similar lying across or near walkways
- inappropriate storage that partially obstructs a walkway
- any steps or other changes in height - particularly where they are only small or narrow - or other small obstructions in a walkway requiring people to step over them
- building fixtures and fittings that protrude into walkways at a height that they could be missed - such as at or below knee height - or are fixed to the walking surface, such as protruding bolt heads, door stops, power sockets, flanges, computer connection points and similar

- poor visibility caused by inadequate or defective lighting, or the 'masking' effect of dust or glare.
- passageways where trolleys are used, where an uneven surface could result in spillages or damage
- lack of concentration - e.g. distraction, fatigue, alcohol or drugs
- people moving quickly, whether they should or not e.g. areas accessed by visitors and members of the public
- contaminated footwear used by people working in, or passing through, which may bring in slip hazards, such as liquids or dusts, from outside or other work areas
- installing equipment away from services and communications outlets requiring trailing cables
- not taking into consideration the effect of new equipment on existing equipment e.g. moving equipment so that parts previously safely out of the way now intrude into walkways
- impairing workers' vision by moving people or equipment away from windows or light sources - or subjecting them to glare

Checklist of Housekeeping and Storage Considerations:

- ensure work areas are kept tidy and waste does not accumulate in inappropriate areas or block or restrict walkways
- Provide suitable waste disposal receptacles
- provide adequate storage, don't allow products and tools, etc. to obstruct walkways
- changes in level of walkways should be well lit and easy to recognise
- noses of steps/stairs should be identified
- ensure any protrusions into walkways are removed, re-sited, protected by barriers or covers, or are made easier to see
- provide appropriate employees with information, instruction and training report faults, particularly to floor coverings or trailing cables and ensure these are dealt with and taken out of use until rectified
- conduct adequate inspections of work areas to spot potential problems and resolve them before they become significant risks

- ensure adequate cable management systems are available and used when cables cross walkways
- provide adequate lighting and report any faults quickly

Other Considerations when Identifying Hazards

Changes of Use

It is important that any changes in use of an area - including something as simple as rearranging the layout - are properly planned. This ensures that the change of use does not introduce new hazards. Managers should be informed of any changes, which may pose a risk.

Controlling the Risks of Slips, Trips and Falls

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should only be used as a last resort when all other risk control mitigations have been considered and are not suitable (e.g. cleats provided to employees who have to work outside in icy conditions). A suitable assessment of the properties the footwear require must be carried out to ensure the right PPE is provided.

Selection and Maintenance of Floor Surfaces and Cleaning Regimes

To effectively control slips and trips, floor surfaces should be correctly specified and maintained. Floor coverings with adequate micro-surface roughness and slip resistance characteristics should be used. Only the correct cleaning products and cleaning regimes should be used for floor surfaces. Where floor surfaces are being cleaned using wet cleaning methods there should be clear and visible signage indicating which areas are wet and where people need to access these areas during cleaning activities, a dry route must be maintained and adequately signed.

See Appendix 1 for Control Measures for preventing slips trips and falls

Area Inspections

It is important to undertake regular informal and formal inspections of all work areas. When conducting a formal inspection you should record the findings. Informal inspections can be carried out by walking through work areas to identify zones where slip and trip hazards are likely to occur. This should include inspections of external areas. Attention should also be given to any areas where dust and liquid accumulation can reduce friction to a dangerous level. Talk to people who regularly check the whole site and look at reported incidents to determine areas presenting a significant risk. Most areas that present a hazard are obvious to the eye but it's also important to take into consideration the areas where problems only occur infrequently. You can read the [Workplace Inspection Guidance](#) for advice on how to carry out a workplace inspection.

Employee Information, Training and Communication

It is important that there is appropriate workforce training about the prevention of slips, trips and falls. Various methods of internal communication are currently used to raise employees awareness, including articles in Our Derbyshire, the use of incident reports, dissemination by the HSW function, Unions and the Health and Safety Committee meetings and minutes.

Risk Assessment

A [Slips Trips Falls Risk Assessment](#) should be in place and communicated to all users of a building/work area.

Actions following a Slip, Trip or Fall

The Council's [Incident Reporting Procedure](#) must be followed for any incident, and an incident form completed. Where an obvious hazard is present it must be eliminated, minimized, or isolated. Where the hazard involves maintenance, or building or flooring fabric, this must be reported and the area made safe or cordoned off until the repairs can be undertaken. Where a significant incident has occurred the Incident Investigation procedure should be followed.

Applicable legislation (Legal Requirements)

[Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#)

[Workplace \(Health, Safety and Welfare\) Regulations 1992](#)

[Occupiers Liability Act 1957](#)

Appendix 1

Control measures to be considered for preventing slips trips and falls

Contamination of the floor from:

- Spillages of solid, liquid materials
- Wet cleaning methods
- Shoes/clothing
- Natural contamination such as wet and/or mud in outside areas
- Dry contamination, e.g. dusts, powders, polythene bags left on floors, product spillages or cardboard laid over spills
- Wind-driven rain, sleet, and snow through doorways.
- Condensation e.g. from poor ventilation

Eliminate contamination in the first place

- Maintain equipment to prevent leakage
- Install suitable entrance matting systems at all entrances to suit prevailing weather
- Consider erecting effective entrance canopies

If not reasonably practicable:

Prevent contamination becoming deposited on walking surfaces

- Use dry clean methods for cleaning floors and dry incoming footwear, by use of suitable entrance matting

If not reasonably practicable:

Limit the effects of the contamination by

- Immediate clearing up of spillages
- Prompt repair of leaks
- Restricting access to contaminated areas

If there is still a risk, follow the next steps

FLOORING

Inherent slip resistance of the floor not maintained adequately, e.g. from:

Incorrect or inadequate cleaning or maintenance and wear

Regain original surface friction by effective cleaning

- Follow an effective cleaning regime; train, supervise and equip cleaners; and Maintain floors and drainage.

If this is not enough, consider slip resistance of the floor:

The slip resistance of the floor is too low

- The factors influencing this are:
- The co-efficient of friction between floor and shoe
- Surface roughness of the floor
- The shape and height of ridges in the floor surface, if profiled
- The drainage capacity of the floor
- The hardness of the floor
- Incorrect installation of the floor.

Increase the slip resistance of the existing floor, e.g. by treating the floor

Some treatments can be ineffective or short-lasting. If this is still not enough then:

Lay a more slip-resistant floor, with a sufficient surface roughness

- Draw up a specification to be met
- Select a floor with a sufficient co-efficient of friction in contaminated conditions (floors rough enough for safety can be cleaned to hygiene requirements)
- Provide effective drainage; check installation is correct, and the specification is met.

And consider the factors below.

- Steps and slopes: do they cause sudden changes in step or not offer adequate foothold and/or handhold?

- Make sure steps and slopes give adequate foot and hand hold and have no sudden changes
- Make sure changes in level are clearly highlighted
- Uneven surfaces e.g., Gullies, holes, changes in level.
- Obstructions - accumulation of items such as from work in progress or waste.
- Eliminate holes, slopes or uneven surfaces which could cause trips risks.
- Good Housekeeping
- Eliminate materials likely to obstruct and cause trips
- Mark fixed obstacles with e.g. black and yellow stripes
- If this is not reasonably practicable prevent material obstructing.

ENVIRONMENT

Adverse conditions affecting use of the floor or distracting attention, e.g.

- Low light levels
- Shadows
- Glare
- Excessive noise
- Extreme temperature
- Excess dust
- Bulky/awkward personal protective equipment (PPE).

Make sure the prevailing conditions allow good visibility of, and concentration on, floor conditions, obstructions, changes in level and slopes

Check lighting levels regularly internally and externally and especially as light levels change for winter months

FOOTWEAR

Shoes offer insufficient slip resistance in combination with the floor surfaces and prevailing contamination/ conditions, e.g.

- Type of shoe
- Fit
- Sole material and pattern
- Contamination of shoes
- Maintenance /renewal
- Wear

Select suitable shoes for the floor, the environment the activity and the individual

Ensure employees are wearing suitable footwear for the task they are doing. This may include implementing rules around what or what isn't acceptable footwear for certain roles/tasks.

Consider additional measures for adverse weather including snow and ice for staff who have to work outside in these conditions.

HUMAN FACTORS

The nature of the task, e.g.

- The need to carry, lift, push, lower or pull loads
- The need to turn, to move quickly or take long strides
- Distractions
- Having no hands free to hold on/break a fall
- Potential for creating obstructions in walkways

Analyse tasks and process flows to see they do not compromise the ability to walk safely in any remaining slip or trip risk areas

Consider vulnerable individuals, e.g.

- Poor knowledge of risks and measures
- Poor health and agility
- Poor eyesight
- Fatigue

Only allocate tasks in slip risk areas to those competent to follow slip pre-cautions

Unsafe actions of people, e.g. from lack of:

- Awareness of risk.
- Knowledge of how slips occur.
- Information and training; and attention and care.
- Good language skills.

Train, inform and supervise employees

Set procedures for visitors - both for your site and for your employees visiting elsewhere.