

CITY AND COUNTY OF CARDIFF

CODE OF GUIDANCE

SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS

Slips, trips and falls are the largest cause of workplace accidents in the UK.

Purpose

The purpose of this Code of Guidance is to provide advice on reducing the likelihood of the occurrence of slips, trips and falls.

The Code of Guidance addresses the following:

- 1.0 Legal requirements in respect of preventing slips, trips and falls
- 2.0 Reducing the risk of slips, trips and falls

1.0 Legal requirements in respect of preventing slips, trips and falls

The Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974 is the overarching framework for all health and safety legislation in the UK and requires employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees and in particular to provide and maintain safe systems of work, a safe place of work, safe access and egress and safe environment.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require suitable and sufficient assessment of risks to employees and this includes considering the risks of slips, trips and falls.

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 lay down minimum standards for a wide range of issues which if not met can lead to slips, trips and falls e.g. lighting, space, floors, maintenance of the workplace, layout of workstations and open windows.

Other legislation e.g. Display Screen Equipment Regulations 1992 and Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 1992, also has implications in reducing slips, trips and falls.

In addition to the employer having legal responsibilities, employees also have duties to co-operate and look after their own and others safety. This can include taking action to reduce the likelihood of a slip, trip and fall, e.g. by good housekeeping.

2.0 Reducing the risk of slips, trips and falls

Good Working Practice

Where possible, the aim should be to **eliminate** risk of slips, trips and fall (e.g. levelling uneven floor surfaces). The next preferred option is **substitution** (e.g. using an alternative method of floor cleaning), followed by **separation** (e.g. using barriers to keep workers away from wet floors). The final prevention measure is **protection** (e.g. wearing footwear with non-slip soles).

The use of personal protective equipment should be a last form of protection after all organisational and technical measures have been exhausted. There are often simple but effective measures that can be taken to reduce or eliminate slip and trip risks.

Specific preventive actions to consider include:

Good housekeeping – poor housekeeping and general untidiness are a major cause of slips and trips. Keep the working environment clean and tidy, with floors and access routes kept clear of obstacles. Remove rubbish regularly so it does not build up. Bottom drawers should be closed when not in use.

Cleaning and maintenance – Regular cleaning and maintenance will minimise risks. Rubbish should be removed regularly and work areas kept clear. Cleaning methods and equipment must be suitable for the surface being treated. During cleaning, and maintenance work, take care not to create new slip and trip hazards. Chemical cleaners must be completely washed away so as not to cause slip hazards. Hand washed or mopped floors should not be left unnecessarily wet. Polish must be of the correct type for the surface being treated. When using cleaners and polishes, the instructions on use should be fully observed. Ideally floors should be cleaned when not in use but if this cannot be done, barriers and warning signs should be used until the floor is safe to walk over.

Lighting – Ensure good lighting levels, functioning and position of lights to ensure all floor areas in and outside buildings are evenly lit and all potential hazards, e.g. obstructions and spills can be clearly seen. Lighting levels need to allow safe passage through and into and out of the premises. Exterior lights may be required, as outdoor workplaces must be adequately lit.

Flooring – Floors should be checked for damage on a regular basis and maintenance carried out when necessary. Potential slip and trip hazards to look for include holes, cracks and loose carpets and mats. In any location, the floor surface should be suitable for the work carried out e.g. it may need to be resistant to oil and chemicals used in production processes. Coating or chemically treating existing floors can improve their slip-resistant properties. Floors should be kept clean.

Layout and Space – Workplaces should have enough free space to allow people to move around with ease. Furniture and equipment should be arranged so that free movement is not impeded.

Fencing/Barriers – Where someone can fall from a height, e.g. a roof or raised platform, or can fall into a pit or similar structure, secure fencing or other measures e.g. fall arrest systems should be provided to prevent people falling. The type of fencing or other means of reducing risk of falling will depend on the particular circumstances but needs to be suitable.

Changes in Level – Changes of level, such as a step between floors, which are not obvious should be marked to make them conspicuous and should be adequately lit.

Windows, Skylights and Ventilators – It should be possible to reach and operate the control of openable windows, skylights and ventilators in a safe manner. Where necessary, window poles or similar equipment should be kept available, or a stable platform or other safe means of access should be provided. Controls should be placed so people are not likely to fall through or out of the window. Where there is a danger of falling from a height, devices should be provided to prevent the window opening too far.

Access to High Level Shelves, etc – Suitable ladders or other equipment e.g. “elephant foot” should be provided to give access to high level shelves, etc. The use of chairs, tables, etc is not acceptable.

Stairways – Many accidents occur on stairways. Handrails, slip resistant covers to steps, high visibility and non-slip marking of the front edges of steps and sufficient lighting can all help in preventing slips and trips on stairs. They need to be well marked, with appropriate use of safety signs.

Spillages – Clean up spills immediately using an appropriate cleaning method (chemical treatment may be required). Use warning signs where the floor is wet and arrange alternative routes. What caused the spill to occur-can work methods or workplace be changed to minimise spillages?

Obstructions – Where possible, obstructions should be removed to prevent trips occurring. If it is not possible to remove an obstruction then suitable barriers and/or warning notices should be used.

Trailing cables – Place equipment so cables do not cross pedestrian routes. Use cable covers to securely fix cables to surfaces.

Footwear – Employees need to have footwear that is suitable for their working environment. Take account of the type of job, floor surface, typical floor conditions and the slip-resistant properties of the soles.

Outdoor workplaces – Outdoor workplaces must be arranged so that risks of slipping and tripping are minimised e.g. through anti-slip measures in icy conditions and suitable footwear.

REMEMBER:

The biggest reason for slips, trips and falls is people not paying attention to what they are doing, e.g. reading whilst walking or by rushing to get something done and forgetting to take due care.

Further Information:

Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974
Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992