



All employers have to assess the risks to employees and others who may be affected by their work, e.g. visitors and members of the public. This helps to find out what needs to be done to control the risk. It is also needed to satisfy the law. HSE recommend a five-step approach to risk assessment, and slip and trip risks should be among the risks examined.

Step 1 – Look for slip and trip hazards

Around the workplace, such as uneven floors, trailing cables, areas that are sometimes slippery due to spillages. Include outdoor areas.

Step 2 – Decide who might be harmed and how

Who comes into the workplace? Are they at risk? Do you have any control over them? Remember that older people and people with disabilities may be at particular risk.

Step 3 – Consider the risks

Are the precautions already taken adequate to deal with the risks?

Step 4 – Record your findings

If you have five or more employees.

Step 5 – Regularly review the assessment

If any significant changes take place, make sure existing precautions and management arrangements are still adequate to deal with the risks.

What the Law Says

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (HSWA) requires employers to ensure the health and safety of all employees and anyone who may be affected by their work. This includes taking steps to control slip and trip risks. Employees must not endanger themselves or others and must use any safety equipment provided. Manufacturers and suppliers have a duty to ensure that their products are safe. They must also provide adequate information about appropriate use.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 build on HSWA and include duties on employers to assess risks (including slip and trip risks) and where necessary take action to safeguard health and safety.

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 require floors to be suitable, in good condition and free from obstructions. People must be able to move around safely.

Good Working Practice

Get conditions right from the start – this will make dealing with slip and trip risks easier.

Choose only suitable floor surfaces and particularly avoid very smooth floors in areas that will become wet/contaminated (such as kitchens and entrance halls).

Ensure lighting levels are sufficient, properly plan pedestrian and traffic routes and avoid overcrowding.

Cleaning and Maintenance

Train workers in the correct use of any safety and cleaning equipment provided.

Cleaning methods and equipment must be suitable for the type of surface being treated. You may need to get advice on the appropriate method of treatment, from the manufacturer or supplier. Take care not to create additional slip or trip hazards while cleaning and maintenance work is being done.

Carry out all necessary maintenance work promptly (you may need to get outside help or guidance). Include inspection, testing, adjustment and cleaning at suitable intervals.

Keep records so that the system can be checked.

Lighting

Use of lighting should enable people to see obstructions, potentially slippery areas etc., so they can work safely. Replace, repair or clean lights before levels become too low for safe work.

Floors

Need to be checked for loose finishes, holes and cracks, worn rugs and mats, etc. Take care in the choice of floor if it is likely to become wet or dusty due to work processes. Seek specialist advice when choosing a floor for difficult conditions

Obstructions

Objects left lying around can easily go unnoticed and cause a trip. Try to keep work areas tidy and if obstructions can't be removed, warn people using signs or barriers. Cardboard should not be used to absorb spillages as this itself presents a tripping hazard.

Footwear

Plays an important part in preventing slips and trips. This is especially important where floors can't be kept dry. Your footwear supplier should be able to advise on shoes/boots with slip-resistant soles. Employers need to provide footwear, if it is necessary to protect the workers' safety. There are many simple steps you can take to reduce risks.