

Slips, Trips and Falls

Background

Slips, trips and falls are a significant health and safety concern for all organisations. In 2014 – 15 they were the largest cause of non-fatal accidents (i.e. [specified injuries over 7 day injuries](#)) that were reported to the HSE under RIDDOR ([Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013](#)). They accounted for 28% of what was reported, which was over 21,000 accidents.

In most organisations slips, trips and falls are the largest cause of accidents. The outcomes of this type of accident based on factors like how a person fell, what they fell onto, their physical condition. In serious cases, major and life changing injuries can be caused. This is a particularly important factor to consider for any charity that is likely to have vulnerable service users, volunteers or workers present. Accidents caused to these types of persons are likely to be more serious.

Legislation

There are 3 main pieces of legislation in this area. [The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 \(HASAW\)](#) requires charities to ensure the health and safety of all workers and anyone who may be affected by their activities, so far as is reasonably practicable. This includes taking steps to control slips, trips and falls. Workers have a duty not to put themselves or others in danger through their actions i.e. not cause slip, trip and fall hazards, and must use any safety equipment provided by the employer e.g. non-slip footwear.

[The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 \(MHSWR\)](#) requires charities to carry out risk assessments on their activities, reducing the risk from hazards to an acceptable level. This would include slips, trips and falls

[The Workplace \(Health, Safety and Welfare\) Regulations 1992 \(WHSWR\)](#) require floors in workplaces be suitable, in good condition and free from obstructions. Staircases should be provided with a handrail to reduce fall risks. Lighting in workplaces should also be sufficient to enable hazards to be seen.

The HSE have guidance on this topic, following several campaigns they have ran in the past. This includes [dedicated webpages](#) on their website, an [E Learning tool](#)



How they fell, what they fell onto and the physical condition of the person falling can alter the severity of a slip, trip and fall

Photos: HSE



called 'STEP', simple [guidance leaflet](#) and [hazard checking spot list](#).

Key Requirements

Key Requirement	Content of requirement
<p>Slip, trip and fall causation factors</p>	<p>There are 4 main categories of factors that can influence whether a slip, trip or fall occurs. These are shown in the graphic below, and explained further in the following sections.</p> <div data-bbox="438 454 1230 1070" data-label="Diagram"> </div>
<p>Design and maintenance</p>	<p>If potential slip, trip and fall issues are resolved at the design stage it can prevent them from occurring later on. Adequate maintenance of flooring and machinery can also prevent them from becoming damaged and posing slip, trip and fall hazards. Some considerations for this area are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the floor suitable for the workplace? E.g. non slip flooring in a kitchen. • Is it correctly fitted? As poorly fitted flooring can pose ridges or other tripping points. • Are flooring and machinery properly maintained? If not, machinery could leak or flooring could become damaged. • Are the walkways wide enough for the work taking place? • Are walkways level? • Are stairs suitable for the work taking place? • Are risers consistent, with nosings highlighted where necessary? • Are usable handrails available on staircases? • Is the lighting good enough for workers to see hazards? And is the lighting not excessive? As this can cause a glare that prevents good viewing of hazards. <div data-bbox="836 1288 1342 1727" data-label="Image"> </div> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Poorly maintained floors can pose trip hazards</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Photo: HSE</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any distractions that might prevent them from seeing where they are going? E.g. noise, temperature, humidity and similar issues. • Are other environmental issues relevant? E.g. rain water, cold temperatures, frost, condensation, etc., all of which could pose slipping hazards on the floor.
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Walkways	<p>These factors relate to whether or not the walkways are fit for purpose. Some considerations for this area are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are walkways suitable for the work being carried out on them? • Are walkways in the right place and being used? • What occurs on the walkway? Do the tasks that take place prevent a worker from being able to see hazards?
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Housekeeping	<div data-bbox="347 609 678 1196" data-label="Image"> <p>A yellow plastic caution sign stands on a light-colored floor. The sign features a black silhouette of a person slipping and the text 'CAUTION' at the top and 'WET FLOOR' at the bottom. A small puddle of liquid is visible on the floor near the base of the sign.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="347 1216 715 1317" data-label="Caption"> <p><i>Effective floor cleaning should be done at suitable times to reduce the risks</i></p> </div> <div data-bbox="347 1339 518 1370" data-label="Text"> <p>Photo: ROSPA</p> </div> <p>These factors relate to how effective housekeeping and cleaning can reduce slip, trip and fall hazards. Some considerations for this area are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are walkways kept clear with no trailing wires, obstructions or other items on them that people could trip over, e.g. donations in a charity shop. • Are the floor cleaning regimes in place effective? If not they could be leaving grease or substances behind that could make floors slippery. • Does cleaning take place at suitable times and in a way that prevents access to wet floors? • Are methods in place to reduce contamination of floors? E.g. entrance matting to stop flooring in foyers getting wet when there is inclement weather.
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Human factors	<p>All the other factors could be in place, but issues with human behaviour could still cause an accident to occur. Some considerations for this area are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are workers proactive? E.g. dealing with spillages immediately instead of waiting for someone else to do it. • Is non slip or other suitable foot wear needed in that part of your premises? And if so, is it being worn? • Are there issues like workers rushing, carrying objects which prevent them from seeing where they are going, becoming distracted whilst walking e.g. by using a mobile phone, or horseplay? • At large or one off events (e.g. open days), are crowds being managed or are there issues with over crowding and a lack of space? <div data-bbox="943 1397 1326 1778" data-label="Image"> <p>A close-up photograph shows a person's foot in a black high-heeled shoe stepping onto a puddle of liquid on a light-colored floor. The liquid is being displaced by the shoe's heel.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="954 1805 1329 1865" data-label="Caption"> <p>Spillages should be cleared immediately to reduce the risks</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1145 1883 1329 1915" data-label="Text"> <p>Photo: ROSPA</p> </div>
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<p>Ice and snow clearance</p>	 <p><i>The HSE advocate a common-sense approach to snow and ice clearance</i></p> <p>Photo: The Telegraph</p>	<p>Snow and ice outside your premises can cause a serious slipping hazard. The HSE have tried on a several occasions to dispel the myth of people being sued for clearing ice and snow from outside their business. Instead they advocate a common sense approach to clearing it, and their current guidelines link in with what Directgov and Gov.UK advise on how to do this safely.</p> <p>Sensible clearing of snow and ice would ensure pathways and external walkways are clear for people to use, but not pose any additional risks to health and safety.</p>
<p>Controlling the risk</p>	<p>In many cases straight forward measures can control the risk of a slip, trip and fall hazard. Implementing and correcting any issues from the relevant 'slip, trip and fall causation factors' in this document would significantly reduce the risks.</p> <p>A good starting point would also be to carry out risk assessments of your activities, ensuring that suitable control measures are implemented to reduce the risk from hazards identified. Slips, trips and fall hazards should be included as part of this.</p> <p>Regular, ongoing, visual checks and taking action where needed is a big part of reducing the risk from this hazard. The HSE have produced a hazard checking spot list that can be used as a tool to aid this.</p> <p>Human behaviour can be improved through training, such as the HSE's E Learning tool called 'STEP', or other health and safety training. Regular monitoring and supervision of workers is needed to ensure that this training is being followed.</p>	

Unique Challenges

When considering how to control and reduce slips, trips and falls, there are some specific considerations needed based on typical charity settings, including:

- The potential for an increased amount of vulnerable persons to be present, as volunteers, clients or service users.
- Budgetary constraints influence on the amount of ongoing maintenance or selection of flooring at the design stage.
- Human behaviour issues with volunteers, as they can perceive themselves as not being at work.
- Issues with ensuring that volunteers (and workers) are adequately trained and supervised.
- Perceived myths around ice and snow clearance