

## Safety Services

### Guidance on Preventing Slips and Trips

#### Introduction

1. Slips and trips are a common cause of accidents at work. They can occur on level surfaces, on steps or uneven conditions and they are often implicated in initiating falls from ladders, scaffolding or roofs. Whilst some cause embarrassment or minor injury, a significant number lead to very serious injury or death. In many cases, the costs of avoiding such accidents are very low – tidying away a trailing cable costs nothing.

#### Responsibilities

2. Everyone has some degree of responsibility. Key players are:
  - those who can design out hazards, either in new build projects or in repair and maintenance work (primarily Estates personnel), and
  - those who observe conditions of concern around the campus. Everyone has a responsibility to report these (eg if repair to a paving surface is required), or to deal with them immediately if it is within their power to do so (eg to pick up a banana skin, or at least to kick it off the path!).

#### Guidance

3. The University's primary objective (and legal obligation) is to avoid or prevent circumstances where slips and trips are more likely to occur. Where this cannot be achieved, other measures can be considered and implemented.
4. The following sections should therefore be viewed in order of preference, to the extent that they apply.

##### **1. Design out hazards e.g.**

- specify new floor surfaces with appropriate surface micro-roughness or coefficients of friction, in both dry *and wet* conditions
- avoid unusual or unexpected changes in level or types of floor coverings
- provide good standards of lighting, particularly at changes in level (including stairs)
- during maintenance and repair, fence off work areas, keep all materials within the delineated area
- specify any repair or replacement materials that are compatible with existing finishes and can be installed without creating trip hazards at the boundaries
- identify clearly any edges or changes in level that cannot be designed out (stair nosings, start of slopes). These should be compatible with requirements for partially sighted or blind people.

- specify suitable and long-lasting floor covering fastenings and nosings, and ensure they are fitted properly
- specify sufficient power outlets close to foreseeable use of portable appliances, to reduce the risk of trailing cables
- route discharges of steam or particulates away from walkways, to eliminate obstructions to vision or conditions favouring growth of algae

This is primarily the responsibility of Estates and Facilities but also of others involved in specifying work. The Safety Team in Safety Services can provide further advice and guidance, and measurement of surface roughness

## **2. Remove or deal with transient hazards eg**

- report all near misses so that adverse conditions can be put right before the next person slips and is injured
- report defects observed in paving (broken slabs, mossy or slippery conditions), and flooring (eg loose nosings, worn carpets)
- clear up spillages as they occur, and remove items left on floors and walkways
- re-route trailing cables
- follow method statements during cleaning, and observe the "Cleaning in Progress" signs

Everyone can participate in this aspect of reducing slip and trip accidents.

Use the Estates Helpdesk – extension 52424 or <http://www.estates.manchester.ac.uk/services/msu/helpdesk/> to report problems before there is an accident

## **3. Carry out risk assessments for remaining risks that cannot be eliminated eg**

- if paving defects or condition requires a long term strategy of improvement, or work cannot be carried out immediately for operational reasons, it may be necessary to develop an action plan to deal with urgent repair with a very short timescale, and a monitoring brief until a proper repair can be effected
- if something causing a leak of water or grease cannot be repaired during use, a mop-up procedure may have to be implemented until the equipment can be shut down for overhaul
- if littering of the floor in a particular area is repeatedly observed (eg near a food outlet), a series of measures may be considered, eg waste bins, signs, change in the containers food is served in, etc.

Estates and Facilities are responsible for external conditions and many common or shared parts of buildings, but Heads of Schools and Directorates will need to ensure their own risk assessments cover slip and trip risks that cannot be eliminated. The University's risk assessment form can be used, at

<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=10019>

There are examples of hazards and simple steps that can be taken in the HSE guidance booklet at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg225.pdf> (pages 8 & 9).

Advice and guidance is also available from Safety Services.

#### **4. Investigate accidents and near misses**

- these should be investigated with a view to establishing all possible contributory causes. What appears to be a simple trip on stairs may involve, for example, a combination of loose nosing or uneven tread, someone carrying something or rushing, poor lighting, clothing that caught in a high heel and a distraction.
- in the investigation report, ensure that recommendations are passed on those who can take the necessary action(s).

Those appointed school or directorate safety advisors will often be involved in these investigations, with line managers and the person reporting the incident.

Safety Services will assist and advise in accident investigations, and report those with more serious outcomes to the enforcing authorities.

5. Use accident and near miss statistics or reported defects to identify "hot spots" of particular concern in areas you are responsible for. This may be external paving, a particular staircase or step, a section of flooring prone to leaks of water or grease, an area where trailing cables are often observed.
6. Usually, several causative factors are involved in any single slip or trip. The following is an analysis of the first complete year of accident statistics for the merged university, for slips and trips.
7. At this University, between January – December 05:
  - 61 slips/trips were reported to Health & Safety Services (16% of all accidents)
  - Slips and trips were the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest cause of accidents
  - 10 of these resulted in injuries severe enough to require reporting to the enforcement authorities (29.4% of reportable accidents).
  - Injured persons had an average 7.9 days off for each reportable accident
  - 21 (34%) occurred outside
  - 10 (16%) happened on steps and stairs
  - 14 (23%) were primarily caused by spillages or wet surfaces
  - 9 (15%) were trips over obstructions such as cables, cardboard sheets.

## 8. Nationally

- Every hour in Britain someone breaks a bone at work.
- Every year two people die after tripping.

9. Obtain guidance and advice from Safety Services. They have a surface microroughness meter, and can input measurements into the Health & Safety Executive's slips assessment tool (SAT) at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/slips/sat/> . This in turn can inform a risk assessment or accident investigation, and help in developing action plans and recommendations for future improvements, and also be used to specify new surfaces or assess modifications to existing surfaces.

## Training Requirements

10. Training in risk assessment generally, and in accident investigation, is available from the Staff Training and Development Unit.

## Bibliography

The HSE's website has a page dedicated to slips and trips, at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/slips/index.htm>

This includes a presentation package, case studies, and links to plenty of other sources of advice.

Documents of particular relevance are :

**Slips and Trips: The Importance of floor cleaning.** HSE free guidance at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/web/slips02.pdf>

**Slips and trips: guidance for employers on identifying hazards and controlling risks**, HSG155, HSE Books, 1996. ISBN 0 7176 1145 0

**Preventing slips and trips at work**, INDG225(rev1), 08/05, HSE free at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg225.pdf>

**Preventing slips and trips in kitchens and food service** Downloadable at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/cais6.pdf>

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