

# Slips and trips.

## Schools Safety Guide

### Document information

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## Introduction

Slips & trips are the most commonly reported work-related accidents and make up over a third of all major injuries; a simple slip could even lead to death. In one accident, a school meals employee slipped on custard spilt on the wooden floor of the dining room. They broke a leg and died later from a blood clot. This illustrates the potential severity of incidents and the importance of immediate action to prevent them.

## Risk Assessment

Schools are often complex sites and measures to control slip and trip risks may vary according to the different areas of the school and the activities undertaken. Schools should ensure the common slip and trip risks in school along with the [practical measures](#) to control risk are recorded in the school's general risk assessment.

Additional specific risk assessments maybe required where schools identify activities or areas that present specific slip and trip risks.

Risk factors schools need to consider in managing slips and trips include:

### Contamination

Clean, dry floors should be safe floors. Contamination, that is anything that ends up on the floor e.g. rain water, spillages of food, liquids, school materials paints in art, dust from woodworking activities, etc is involved in most slip accidents. On smooth floors such as vinyl, ceramic tiles etc even tiny amounts of contamination can be a real slip problem.

Contamination can be introduced by a specific work activity or by [cleaning](#).

Controlling contamination starts with identifying where the contamination is coming from, is this, spills, leaks, overflows, cleaning activity, water run-off, rain/snow/ice being brought in by footwear.

### People

The way people behave at work can affect slips and trips.

Schools should be encouraging/embedding a culture of; "see it sort it" to dealing with small spillages, instead of waiting for someone else to deal with it. Suitable absorbent materials should be available in key areas (staff rooms, art and craft, wet play areas) to promote this behaviour.

For larger significant spillages staff should make the area safe/prevent people accessing the area and alert the relevant people to deal with the spillage (site/cleaning team).

Staff should not rush around or carry large objects that obstruct their view and increase the risk of tripping.

Staff should wear appropriate [footwear](#) for work.

## Flooring

Flooring must be suitable for the workplace and the type of activity that takes place in workplaces. Flooring must be maintained in good condition and free from obstructions.

## Environment

Environmental issues can increase the risk of slips and trips. Things to consider might be;

- Inadequate lighting making it difficult for people to spot obstructions
- Too much light causing glare and reflections again making obstructions or changing levels difficult to see
- Weather rain, snow, ice making flooring slippery

## Cleaning

Schools should decide what they need to do to manage and supervise the work of cleaning staff effectively. This will include, **how**, and just as importantly, **when**, the work will be done and the precautions that will be taken to reduce the risk of slip & trip incidents occurring. Relevant issues include:

- Ensure regular cleaning takes place during low occupancy levels (e.g. before the start or after finish of school day),
- what equipment should, or should not, be used
- personal protective equipment to be used and who will provide it
- working procedures
- the number of people needed to do the job
- reporting of incidents and keeping records
- training of employees

Cleaning and slip & trip accidents are closely linked, so for slips & trips to be tackled successfully, safe cleaning must be considered. This is not just a concern of cleaning staff; everyone has a job to do - keeping their workspace tidy and dealing with their own spillages (see [people](#) above).

The process of cleaning can create slip & trip hazards, especially for those entering the area being cleaned. For example, smooth floors left damp by a mop are likely to be extremely slippery, and trailing wires from a vacuum or buffing machine can present a trip hazard.

People often slip on floors that have been left wet after cleaning. On a smooth surface, even a tiny amount of water can present a real slip problem, e.g. when left wet after mopping. Dry mopping/use of a squeegee can help with drying times. Cones and signs don't keep people out of an area and, if used incorrectly, are often ignored.

## Footwear

Footwear plays an important role in preventing slips. Establishing a 'sensible shoe' policy (e.g. flat shoes that enclose the whole foot, not sandals or sling backs), for all staff and pupils, has been shown to make a significant impact on reducing slips & trips.

## Common control measures

Area	Practical measures for slips risk control
External steps, paths and parking areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suitable lighting – replace, repair or clean lights before levels become too low</li> <li>• Ensure steps and paths are suitable for the volume of pedestrian traffic</li> <li>• Ensure paving slabs are secure and tarmac paths in good condition to give a flat, even surface</li> <li>• Maintain parking area so that it is free of potholes</li> <li>• Mark the nosing of steps using anti-slip (not gloss) coating</li> <li>• Provide handrails where appropriate and maintain in good condition</li> <li>• Discourage short cuts across grassed/muddy areas</li> <li>• Clean leaves, mud, etc from surfaces</li> <li>• Remove algal growth</li> </ul>
Playgrounds and all-weather sports surfaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure surface is flat and well maintained to avoid surface water</li> <li>• Remove accumulations of mud/water/fallen leaves/algal growth, etc</li> <li>• Ensure users wear the appropriate footwear for the surface</li> </ul>
Building entrances/exits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Properly positioned door canopies of good size can prevent rain and dirty water from entering the building and getting onto the floor, so preventing slip risks</li> <li>• Provide nonslip, water absorbing mats (large enough to dry shoes) at entrances</li> <li>• Maintain mats in good condition and change when saturated</li> <li>• Ensure that temporary matting does not curl and so pose a trip hazard</li> <li>• Highlight the noses and/or display signs warning of hidden steps/changes of level</li> <li>• Display signs warning of risk of slipping when appropriate</li> <li>• Site door catches and door stops safely</li> </ul>
Sports halls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure suitable footwear is worn</li> <li>• Maintain floor mats in good condition and ensure they remain flat</li> <li>• Keep smooth floors clean and completely free of wet or dust contamination</li> <li>• Don't make smooth sports hall floors even smoother by polishing and buffing</li> </ul>
Changing rooms/swimming pools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid contamination of the floor surface with mud/water from pupils entering by:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ providing shoe cleaning brushes/scrapers</li> <li>○ providing suitable entrance mats for pupils to clean and dry feet on</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Provide nonslip floor surfaces. Ensure specialist anti-slip flooring is sourced and specified correctly</li> <li>• Provide nonslip mats or grids in shower areas</li> </ul>

Area	Practical measures for slips risk control
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide handholds for people with disabilities</li> <li>• Display 'no running' signs</li> </ul>
Kitchens and dining halls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance of kitchen equipment to prevent leaks</li> <li>• Non-slip and appropriate flooring suitable for kitchens</li> <li>• Materials available to deal promptly with spillages</li> <li>• Suitable footwear in use to prevent slips and injury from spillages (hot liquids)</li> </ul>
Cleaning activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid scheduling the cleaning regime, when there is high occupancy in the school</li> <li>• Use the correct cleaning materials and in the correct dilution (as per supplier's recommendations)</li> <li>• Use dry mopping techniques to leave floors as near dry as possible after cleaning</li> <li>• Use wet floor signs sparingly i.e. only when floors are wet/damp. Signs left out continuously lose their impact and people become immune to the message</li> </ul>
Housekeeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the walkways are kept free of obstruction as far as possible</li> <li>• Provide storage/shelving for resources</li> <li>• If walkways are temporarily obstructed, make sure they are highlighted</li> </ul>
Contamination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain equipment</li> <li>• Good/regular cleaning practices/schedules</li> <li>• Entrance matting</li> <li>• Freely available spill response materials (absorbent cloths adjacent to wet play areas, art and craft areas)</li> </ul>

## Monitoring

Schools should ensure through regular workplace inspections that their controls to manage slip, and trip hazards in the workplace are implemented and effective. A record of these should be made on the [Workplace Inspection Checklist](#) available on the PPS website.

## Further information

Please contact the health & safety unit if you require further information on slips & trips in the workplace.

E-learning resource for slips and trips can be found on the HSE website:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/slips/step/index.htm> Further information on slips & trips in education is also available on HSE's website:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/slips-in-education.htm>