

ALSCO
**WORKPLACE
GUIDE**



REDUCING TRIPS AND SLIPS
IN THE WORKPLACE



WELCOME

INTRODUCTION

Film makers like to think of slipping and tripping in the workplace as a source of comedy, but the reality is that millions of workers experience both minor and major injuries as a result of momentarily losing their footing.

These injuries typically range from simple cuts and bruises to musculoskeletal injuries, fractures and dislocations. The truth is that such injuries are completely unnecessary, and with a range of simple measures and checks, the frequency of such incidents can be drastically reduced.

So, we have put together a detailed guide that, if followed, can make your workplace safer for everyone working there (and even visiting).

Before we start, however, there are two points to bear in mind. Firstly, understand that this is a practical guide, so should not be considered a source of any kind of legal advice on issues regarding to slipping and falling in the workplace. It is essential that you consult the relevant professional for such advice.

Secondly, slipping and tripping are considered separate to a fall at work. By definition, trips happen when a person catches their foot in an object or on a surface, such as wiring or cabling, an uneven edge, random small items left a floor that go unnoticed, and loose mats or other floor coverings.

A slip refers to when a person loses their grip on the floor below them, usually because of a wet or slippery surface underfoot. This can sometimes be due to spilled liquids or oils, highly polished flooring, or even simply due to wearing inappropriate footwear.

In comparison, a fall can be defined as a loss of balance, or the result of taking a misstep resulting in falling from a higher down one or more levels (such as on a flight of stairs). While slipping or tripping can lead directly to a fall, they don't always and so are considered different events.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Being organised is essential for establishing and maintaining safety measures, so the first step that should be taken is to appoint a member of staff to oversee the switchover to and application of any new procedures. Known as PCBUs (Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking), likely candidates are site managers, floor supervisors, experienced and responsible employees or even company bosses - though it depends on the size and structure of the company of the workplace itself.

A PCBU is just like a safety officer, so there are clearly defined responsibilities that they have to take care of. For example, they must identify possible slip and trip hazards, and then either eliminate them (if possible) or minimise the risk factor.

In fact, there are 4 specific categories of responsibility that a PCBU is concerned with:



Controlling the working environment can require the introduction of considerable changes. These can also be broken down into 6 different categories:

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROLS

improve code of housekeeping practices; introduce warning systems (eg: slippery surface signs); introduce training modules

PERSONAL CONTROLS

introduce regulations/ recommendations regarding personal protective equipment (such as appropriate footwear)

ELIMINATION

remove risks completely by redesigning a workspace (removing steps, surface rises) or its electrical layout (reduce extension cords)

ENGINEERING/ DESIGN CONTROLS

improve drainage; carry out plumbing maintenance; highlight differences in surface height (steps or subtle rises); improve lighting; apply new flooring or introduce matting to improve grip

ISOLATION

cordon off high-risk areas when appropriate (when floor is being cleaned)

SUBSTITUTION

replace slippery flooring with more slip-resistant flooring



IDENTIFYING THE HAZARDS

So, where do the hazards lie? Well, while some exist as a result of poor work space design and organisation, there are many that come from simple neglect. Specific hazards can vary dramatically, depending on the type of workplace, but the existence of multiple slip and trip hazards is typical for every workplace.

SLIP HAZARDS

- spilt liquids or solids
- wet cleaning methods
- wind-driven rain or snow indoors
- wet to dry surface changes
- dusty, sandy surfaces
- unsuitable footwear

TRIP HAZARDS

- ridges in floors or carpets
- worn floor coverings
- cracked floors, potholes
- changes in floor level
- thresholds and doorstops
- floor sockets, phone jacks
- extension cables
- obstructed vision
- obstacles in traffic areas

BOTH

- sudden surface changes
- inclines and declines
- loose or bumpy flooring
- low light levels



RISK CONTROL MEASURES

Effectively dealing with the various slip and trip hazards requires careful planning. After all, a detailed procedural guide acts as a source of reference, and once it is known and adhered to, a more safety-conscious working culture develops.

But risk control measures do not just have to be reactionary, and are not confined to just one or two areas. There are several areas that need to be addressed, starting from the design of the workplace itself, and including housekeeping procedures, staff training, and the use of personal protective equipment.

WORKPLACE DESIGN

Like everything else, the root of the problem is the best place to eliminate it. In many cases, the design and layout of the workplace itself creates the hazards. In pre-existing buildings, redesigning the workplace may mean investing in renovation, but for new buildings, incorporating a number of measures within the construction design can greatly improve safety levels.

There are 4 principal areas that should be considered at the time that building designs are being put together: floors, stairs, drainage and lighting. But, there are also considerations when facilitating storage and work procedures.

Floors

- try to keep floors level
- install ramps instead of steps where level changes are needed
- keep ramps gentle (1:12)
- use non-slip floor tiling
- keep floor textures consistent
- use good lighting and visual aids (signs, reflective strips) where textures change

Stairs

- keep stair risers and treads uniform
- set realistic ranges (risers 150mm - 175mm; treads 225mm - 320mm)
- consider stair elevation (15deg - 55deg)
- provide landings every 16 steps
- provide handrails and banisters



Lighting

- ensure all corridors and stairwells are well-lit
- recommended lighting is 100 lux
- consider external as well as internal lighting

Drainage

- provide adequate drainage systems for working processes/machinery
- consider containers to capture waste liquids/spills
- cover drainage canals with slip-resistant grates

Storage and Work Procedures

- facilitate maximum (not minimum) necessary storage space
- designate specific places for equipment/tool storage
- introduce procedures to ensure immediate return of equipment/tools
- reduce workplace waste through clean-as-you-go procedures
- consider pre-cast supplies in manufacturing/construction sectors
- reduce distracting influences, like noise, dust, fumes etc

Training

While procedures are a highly effective method of handling slip and trip hazards, training is a key part of ensuring that these procedures are maintained and properly executed. By introducing mandatory safety training courses, staff develop higher levels of awareness and greater confidence in handling situations. As a result, safety levels in the workplace are automatically increased.

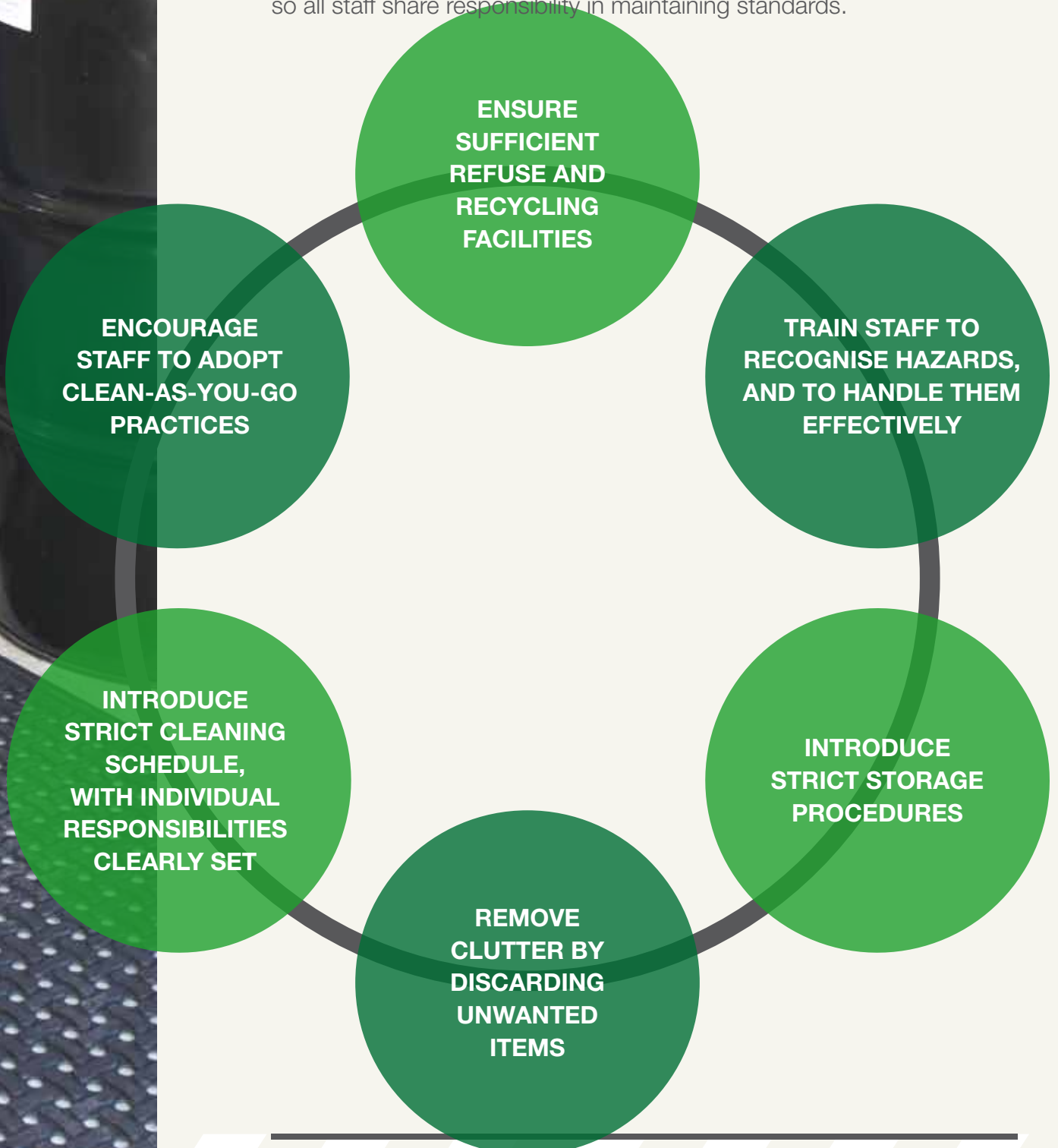
Training courses should ideally include modules dealing with:

- slip and trip hazard awareness
- identifying effective actions
- knowledge of preventative control measures
- specific duties of staff



HOUSEKEEPING

Obviously, good housekeeping measures will result in cleaner flooring, clear aisles and walkways, and therefore a dramatic reduction in risks. However, such control measures must cover all possible working and break areas. If cleaning is out-sourced, be sure to agree the measures with your contractor. But remembers that housekeeping is continuous, so all staff share responsibility in maintaining standards.





PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (FOOTWEAR)

Personal protective equipment refers to any personal item (clothing, footwear, helmets etc) that may prevent or protect against accidents. The right personal equipment depends greatly on the type of work being done, and the type of flooring the work is being done on. In the case of slips and trips, footwear is the principal personal equipment to consider.

However, in most places of work, such controls should only be seen as a temporary option or the last resort, with other control measures considered the primary steps to take. For example, non-slip footwear should be chosen only because the existing flooring is not yet changed, or cannot be changed. Switching to non-slip tiling is a much better option.

So, control measures relating to personal protective footwear should be:

- the only practical option
- an interim solution
- designed to supplement other control measures

But, it should also consider:

- sole tread - deep enough to penetrate surface water and make direct contact with the floor; and flat bottom to grip dry floor effectively
- sole type - urethane and rubber are more slip-resistant than vinyl or leather
- sole design - tiny cell-like features can increase slip resistance greatly



BEATING SLIPPING HAZARDS

It might seem that the causes of slipping in the workplace comes down to simply having a wet surface, but the fact is that a floor can become wet in a number of ways. From bad weather to unexpected spillages, the position within any workplace, as well as the type of work being done there, can be influential.

For example, in the manufacturing sector, oil and grease might leak from machinery on the factory floor, while the office lobby may see rain brought in through dripping umbrellas and clothing, while restrooms and staff kitchens can have wet floors due to accidental spillages.

In each case, however, there are some straightforward measures that can be taken to reduce the risk of slipping to practically zero.

Machinery Liquid Discharges

- regular machinery maintenance
- modify machinery to capture condensation or spills
- modify exhaust systems

Drips and Rainwater

- place absorbent mats on the interior and exterior of the entrance
- have designated non-drip umbrella bins at entrances
- have a designated cloakroom
- easy access to mops and other cleaning equipment

Accidental Spills

- easy access to mops and/or cleaning equipment
- absorbent paper for oily substances
- cleaning procedures to insist on immediate and thorough drying
- have warning signs like 'Caution: Wet Floor' available

BEATING TRIPPING HAZARDS

The most effective method of beating typical tripping hazards is to re-organise the working area, with particular attention paid to the routes that office traffic typically take. But the types of measures that can be introduced can be broken down into 4 categories:

Spatial Organisation

- keep aisles and corridors clear
- provide specific storage areas
- keep storage stacks secure
- clean workplace regularly
- ensure necessary cabling is hidden
- ensure unnecessary cabling is removed

Consistent Floor Surface

- remove floor power sockets, or cover them
- keep cabling off the floor; hang them overhead instead
- repair carpet or tile join points
- ensure surface changes are kept smooth (eg: carpet to wood flooring)
- where possible, remove hidden ridges, inclines and declines

Sufficient Facilities

- install extra power sockets to reduce need for extension cords
- create storage rooms with temporary walls

Keep Workers Aware

- use visual aids to highlight risks
- use reflective strips to designate walkways
- remind workers to do their bit

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

Of course, it is not always possible to set effective control measures independently. In the case where your workplace is shared by different companies, measures need to be agreed between the relevant parties, or with central management, if one exists.

Each party will ideally have their own PCBU, in which case establishing specific areas of responsibility is essential. That way there is less chance of confusion, and measures and procedures can be maintained effectively. Working together means the maximum number of hazards can be eliminated.

A shopping centre provides the perfect example, where common flooring areas is the responsibility of the centre's own management. But within a shop itself, the responsibility lies with the shop management.

When Cooperation is Required

Stock movement or deliveries, and out-of-shop advertisements or displays, require cooperative measures.

A shop PCBU should coordinate with the centre's management regarding the right procedures to follow.

Spills and leaks in public areas must be cleaned up by management, but shop staff should report such accidents as soon as they have been spotted.

Leaks from shared facilities or amenities (security systems or water supply) should be promptly reported, and repaired by the centre's management



ALSCO FLOORCARE RENTAL SERVICES

AlSCO's mat rental service protects customers and staff from the risks of slippery and dirty floors with weekly rates starting from less than \$1 a day.

Work area matting, high traffic, entrance, image, logo mats and more. All available as managed rental services with no costly outlay.

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