



HSE ALERT # 171

SLIPS AND TRIPS

THE IMPORTANCE OF FLOOR CLEANING

Slips and trips are the most common cause of major injuries at work. Almost all slips happen when floors are wet or dirty (for example contaminated with water, oil, food debris, dust etc). Tiny amount of contamination can present a real slip problem. Trips generally take place on damaged, uneven and badly laid floors or because obstacles have been left where people do not expect to find them. Stairs are a particularly hazardous part of the building and become even more so when being cleaned. The potential for a slip or trip applies to both the cleaner and the stair user.

CASE STUDY

Hina slipped on rotting leaves on the concrete steps of the hospital on her way in. The leaves were supposed to be cleared on a daily basis, but had not been because of staff shortages. She fell heavily on her right knee and was still in pain three months later, when she was told she needed surgery.



CASE STUDY

Tiny amounts of water (often almost invisible) on a smooth floor can cause a slip. This guy could have parked his trolley next to the spill and wiped it up with some absorbent material to leave the floor dry.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PREVENT SLIPS AND TRIPS

Control measures can be divided into:

- Management systems;
- Contamination control:
- Preventing contamination,
- Choose the right cleaning method,
- Make sure cleaning does not introduce an additional slip risk;
- Obstacle removal

“Warning signs can be an effective means of informing people of a spill before it can be cleaned up, especially if the spill is visible, indicating the sign is being properly used and, critically, the sign is removed once the area is safe”