

Health and Safety Executive Board Paper		HSE/06/84	
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HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE

The HSE Board

Significant health & safety risks - slips & trips

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Advisor(s): HR Service Centre, Slips & Trips Priority Programme

Cleared by Justin McCracken on 25 September 2006

Issue

1. Report on slips and trips causing injury in HSE.

Timing

2. For discussion at this meeting.

Recommendation

3. That the Board:
 - Notes the main causes of slips and trips that cause injury and the impact this has on HSE as an organisation.
 - Supports the proposed response to this report set out in Paragraph 19

Background

4. This report is the third of the series that the Board requested focusing on different hazard areas in HSE. The aim is to try to look beneath the statistics to ascertain what the root causes were in the main categories of incidents involving HSE staff, and to give Board members a better understanding of what causes ill health and harm in HSE so that they personally consider what they can do to address the issues.

Argument

5. Slips and trips are one of the main causes of injury in HSE both to staff and contractors. The following table sets the pattern of incidents over the last three and a half years. The headings for causation are taken from the FOD inspection guide for slips and trips. The figures include incidents to contractors. Near misses are excluded.

Cause	2006/07 YTD	2005/06	2004/05	2003/04	Total
Slips					
Floor contamination (including ice)	7	10	11	11	39
Poor maintenance of slip resistance					
Slip resistance too low by design		3	4	2	9
Slips on steps/slopes	1	9	2	2	14
Environmental distractions (glare, low light levels etc.)		2			2
Poor footwear (lack of slip resistance)		2	2	1	5
Nature of task (carrying load etc.)		1	1		2
Human factor (fatigue, agility of individual etc.)		1	2		3
Unsafe action					
Trips					
Uneven surfaces/stairs	6	8	13	8	35
Obstructions/trip hazards on floor	4	7	8	5	24
Environmental distractions					
Nature of task		1		1	2
Unsafe action		1	1		2
Reason not clear	2	2	8	3	15
Total for year	20	47	52	33	152
Number RIDDOR reportable	1	7	8	3	19
Number occurring during visits	2	9	9	NA	

6. The above table looks at the primary reason for the injury. Sometimes factors work together to create the incident. It is still possible to use the data to make some observations.
7. It's worth noting that the vast majority of reported incidents happened in the office rather than out on visits. Footwear was responsible for only a minority of injuries. The conclusion from this observation is that the onus on reducing the number of incidents needs to be on reducing slip and trip hazards in HSEs offices.
8. The main single cause of slips is floor contamination, which is for the most part preventable. This covers spills, wet floors after cleaning and ice. Ice is a particular problem at HSL and steps have been taken locally to address this specific issue. HSL, Interserve (HSL Buxton FM) and the site safety committee are currently working to improve our procedures dealing with extreme weather conditions and snow and ice clearance.
9. At HSL the Pedestrian Safety Section has been consulted on identifying improvements in floor surfaces. On several occasions this has led to the surface being replaced or altered to improve slip resistance. This expertise could be used more widely in HSE to tackle poor floor surfaces. Finally, HSL purchased lidded mugs with the HSL logo on, these were given to staff who had a distance to travel to brew points. Their effectiveness is being monitored with a view to purchasing some more. If this trial proves successful and cost effective it could be widened across HSE.

10. There have been other local initiatives in the past directed at slip reduction, for example encouraging dry mopping to reduce standing water after cleaning. Last year site committees were asked to revisit their slip assessment to see if any improvements could be made. It would be best practise if such local initiatives involved the cleaning staff themselves. This approach is taken at HSL where the on-site cleaner reports to HSL about any areas where incidents are more frequent.
11. The main single cause of trips is uneven surfaces/stairs. A further significant number of slip incidents also took place on stairs. Often these incidents are described as lost footing incidents. In some cases problems with uneven floors or poorly maintained stairs have been addressed by BSD. This will continue where incident investigations identify this as relevant. Office inspections need to continue to look for such factors to address them proactively. Furthermore, internal publicity can be used to encourage safe practise on stairs – avoid carrying drinks or rushing, keep hold of the handrail.
12. A high number of injuries were caused by items being left on the floor (e.g. trailing cables). Again these are for the most part preventable risks best addressed by removing the risk when it is identified – the ‘see it – sort it’ approach. This has been encouraged by the effort to make near miss reporting easier. The challenge is to sustain staff awareness and commitment to addressing the problem through internal publicity. Often common walkways are focused on but clutter around desks and drawers left open are also hazardous and need to be addressed. This is one area where Board and SCS example can make a significant difference.
13. There is an increasing amount of relevant published guidance on the prevention of slips and trips. HSE publishes advice on safe cleaning regimes and slips testing. CIRIA (Construction Industry Research and Information Association) published a report in 2006 called ‘*Safer surfaces to walk on*’. This contains extensive advice about introducing solutions to the main causes identified by the analysis of the incident data. It would be useful to monitor compliance against published guidance across the estate either informally through the site safety committees or formally as part of the 2007/08 health and safety audit plan.
14. Another activity for 2007/08 could be involvement with the planned national FOD programme ‘Reducing slips & trips accidents caused by floor cleaning’. This would be an opportunity for government to act as an exemplar. The level of this involvement would need to be agreed between the HSA and the Slips and Trips team but could be that all companies that provide cleaning for HSE attended one of the proposed seminars.
15. Underlying reasons could not be established in a number of cases. This is a general problem with slips and trips investigations. Often investigators have no in-depth experience in slip/trip investigations and are not familiar with some of the excellent guidance that HSE produces. One way to address this would be to produce a simple investigation aide memoire based on the FOD slip/trip inspection topic. The health and safety advisor will continue to challenge investigations that are inadequate.

Consultation

16. The slips and trips priority programme reviewed the paper before it was cleared and offered comment on preventative measures

Costs and Benefits

17. Unlike other risks to HSE staff it is difficult to calculate the costs of slips and trips to the organisation. It is not given as a reason for absence so it is difficult to calculate the costs due to lost time. Slips and trips have led to claims against HSE for negligence. One recent case of a slip on a wet floor cost HSE £10,000. Work to reduce slip incidents will have an impact on costs from civil claims and sickness absence.

Financial/Resource Implications for HSE

18. There should be no measurable resource implications for HSE as the work involved in reducing slip & trip injuries is part of the on-going health and safety work stream across the country. All D/Ds make provision for this activity in their planning

Action

19. It is not possible to completely eliminate slip and trip risks. Work must be focused on addressing preventable incidents in a proactive way. To this end the following actions are recommended:

- The health and safety advisor and slips and trips priority programme team to devise a simple aide memoire for HSE staff based on the inspection guide to assist in the investigation of slips and trips incidents. The aim of this would be to improve the quality of investigation of slip/trip injuries.
- Internal publicity for health and safety to report on the findings of the incident survey highlighting best practise in prevention. The issue needs to be taken seriously and consistent action on prevention needs to become the norm across the organisation.
- To apply the best practise established in local initiatives, particularly in HSL, across the whole of the estate, where appropriate.
- Internal publicity to reiterate the message of 'See it – sort it' to encourage staff to address trip risks before they give rise to injury.
- Board members and other SCS to continue to set a personal example in addressing any slip and trip risk they encounter.
- Ensure that joint management/TU site inspections continue to address slip and trip risks in a thorough, proportionate manner.
- Plan an internal health and safety audit on slips and trips for early 2007/08 to check compliance against the published guidance.
- HSE to participate in the planned programme on reducing slip & trip accidents caused by floor cleaning, with details to be agreed with the slips and trips team.

21. Future Board papers:

- December 06 - Lone working
- February 07 - Work related road risk