

# Watch your step

In the construction industry



## Introduction

Several thousand construction workers are injured each year following a trip or slip while they're at work on a building site. Around 1000 of these involve someone fracturing bones or dislocating joints.

Each year simple accidents like these mean that people just like you have to give up working in the construction industry. You can't afford it, and neither can the industry.

Most of these accidents could be avoided if everyone on site did their bit to make the workplace safer. From the top to the bottom, it's in everyone's interest to keep the sites you work on in good order. The job can be done quicker, more easily and without the risk that workers like you will get seriously injured.

This booklet gives a few examples of some sensible things that can be done to make sure that the sites you work on are kept in good order. But reading the booklet isn't enough. Unless everyone on site actually takes some action to improve the situation, nothing will change, and people like you will continue to be seriously injured.

It's time for change – **SEE IT, SORT IT!**

## Case study

### Mark Paisley

*My name's Mark, and I'm a painter. I've worked on building sites for years now, and just like you I've been told about the big risks on sites, falls from scaffolds, being run over by plant and the like.*

*I never gave much thought to something as simple as tripping up being a real problem. Let's face it, we've all done it, and there's never been a real problem has there?*

*I tripped up ten months ago. I had to move some cans of paint from a pallet into a site cabin, only two or three metres away. The ground I was working on wasn't level. As I turned, my foot caught on the large stones and I fell down. I tried to get back up again but the pain was just incredible.*



*I'd badly fractured two bones in my leg. I was in hospital for weeks, having operations to insert metal pins to keep the bones in line. Even when I got home I wasn't allowed to put any weight on the leg for months. All this from something as simple as a trip.*

*I lost my job, obviously couldn't play sport any more, and I've not been able to do most of the things that I always took for granted. My doctor's just told me that I can go back to work, ten months after the accident.*

*I found out the hard way just what a trip can mean. What will it take for you to realise?*

## Case study

### Mick Lakey

*My name's Mick. I'm the construction manager of a scaffolding company.*

*We recognised that slips and trips were regularly the biggest cause of injuries to our staff. Now trips don't often grab the headlines, but to a business like ours, which depends on the health of our workforce, they can be critical.*

*We decided to do something about these risks and by talking to our staff at all levels of the company we put together an action plan to tackle the problem. For example, one of the things that we do now is make sure that the ground we have to work on, or walk along, is firm*



*and level. Where it isn't, we use matting to provide a more even surface.*

*Where we've got to walk over kerbs we make sure they're clearly marked.*

*It's still early days but we're confident that by taking positive action to deal with the risk of trips, it's not only our staff who'll be staying healthy, but the business as well. Everyone wins.*



## Case study

### Steve Dath

*My name's Steve. I'm a site manager on a large development in Liverpool.*

*Like most big sites we've got lots of people here at the same time, all different trades and all competing for space on the site.*

*We recognise that without good management the site could be chaotic, with the risk of having materials and waste all over the place. Knowing that slips and trips are the biggest cause of accidents on sites, we make everyone on the site responsible for keeping their work area clear and tidy.*



*As the principal contractor we do our bit of course, but we expect everyone else on the site to play their part as well. We've set out simple rules so that all the subcontractors know how we expect them to manage their work area and deal with the materials they use and the waste they create.*

*To help us keep good order on the site we've even employed a subcontractor to make sure the site stays tidy.*

*It's working well on the site so far, accident numbers are down and everyone's able to get on with their job without having to waste time clearing up after others.*

## Case study

### Joe Condron

*My name's Joe, I'm the foreman of the cleaning firm that works on Steve's site.*

*It's my job to walk round and make sure all the corridors and stairways are clear, and check that the subcontractors are putting their waste in the bins on each floor, which we then empty for them.*

*If I come across someone not following the rules on good order, then I get them to clear the mess up. If they don't sort it, then I get my own men to clear up and the subcontractor gets a bill for our time.*



*I can see that it's working well here because everyone knows what's expected of them, and everyone gains from the site being tidy. The job gets done quicker, and there's less risk of accidents.*

## Case study

### Dave Jordan

*My name's Dave and I'm a construction inspector with the Health and Safety Executive.*

*The most common reasons for slip and trip accidents are that corridors or stairs are obstructed with materials or waste, lighting cables are strewn around on the floor, footpaths aren't properly stoned or levelled, and simple things like steps into site cabins aren't built properly.*

*Everyone on site has a part to play in making sure these situations don't arise, yet all too often they do.*



*We all know that sites can be hectic places, with many people and trades competing for space and time, but if everyone plays their part in keeping their work area clear, and their materials and waste tidy, then everyone wins. People and materials can move around the site easier, the job gets done quicker and, most importantly, thousands of people each year, people just like you, don't get seriously injured.*

*It doesn't matter what your position on the site is. You can make the place safer. Don't just **SEE** something that can trip someone up, **SORT IT!***

*It might be you who takes the fall next time.*

Here are some simple things that you can do to reduce the risk of slip and trip accidents on your site:

- Keep storage areas tidy.
- Plan deliveries to minimise the amount of materials on site.
- Ensure footpaths are safe to use: levelled if rutted, stoned if muddy, gritted when icy.
- Make sure that all corridors, stairways, footpaths or other areas used by pedestrians are kept clear of obstructions at all times.
- Tie up loose cables, particularly along corridors.
- Make sure that steps into site cabins are properly constructed.
- Make sure work areas are kept as tidy as possible while the work's going on.
- Put barriers around, or covers over, all holes and excavations into which people could fall.
- Have a system in place to manage the waste created on the site.
- And most importantly, make sure that everyone knows what they have to do.



Ask yourself the following questions:

- Whose job is it to clear up the waste?  
How often?
- Are bins provided? How many?  
Where? Who by?
- Whose job is it to empty the bins?  
Where to? How?
- Whose job is it to make sure the waste is removed from the site?

Everyone has a role to play in keeping the site in good order.

**SEE IT, SORT IT!**