

# Preventing slips and trips in kitchens and food service

## HSE information sheet

## Catering Information Sheet No 6

### Introduction

This information sheet was produced by the Hospitality and Catering Industry Liaison Forum, which has members from trade and professional associations, unions and enforcement authorities. Members' associations are free to reproduce and distribute this guidance to catering establishments. The guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive.

This guidance is aimed at employers in the catering industry. Slips and trips are the most common cause of major accidents at work. The costs to the catering industry are substantial, in financial terms and human cost and suffering to those injured.

Civil legal actions brought because of an injury can be extremely damaging to businesses, especially where customers are involved. Insurance covers only a small proportion of the costs. It may not cover the cost of hiring temporary staff and may have an impact on your reputation.

### What the law says

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (the HSW Act) requires employers to ensure the health and safety of all employees and anyone who may be affected by their work. This includes taking steps to control slip and trip risks.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 build on the HSW Act and include duties on employers to assess risks (including slip and trip risks) and take action to control these risks. The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 require floors to be suitable, in good condition and free from obstructions.

### Slips and trips in catering

Slips and trips are a particular problem in catering establishments.

### Key messages

- People working in kitchens and food service are more likely to be injured through slips and trips than by anything else.
- The pace of work in this environment can sometimes be intense. This is when accidents are most likely to occur.
- Simple measures reduce kitchen slip and trip accidents and injuries dramatically.

### Key points

- Most slip injuries happen on wet floors or floors contaminated with food debris or fluids such as oil.
- Most trips are due to poor housekeeping.
- Planning ahead will help you deal with any such problems during busy periods, when the pace of work increases.

### Assessing and reducing the risk

The HSE guidance leaflet *Stop slips in kitchens: A good practice guide* includes a table which will help you work out how you can reduce the risk of someone having a slip accident in your kitchen. It asks you to look at your floor, informs you what common slip issues are associated with it and provides you with information on action you can take to prevent slips. The advice on prevention represents examples of good practice. Other methods of slip prevention may be used if they are equally or more effective in your workplace.

### Preventing slips

Wet and contaminated floors are often the cause of slips, you can stop these by:

- maintaining equipment to prevent any leaks of oil, water etc;
- having a system for promptly reporting and

dealing with equipment faults;

- using splashguards or edged work surfaces to contain spillages;
- using lids and covers for pans and containers, especially when they are being carried;
- having a well-maintained extraction and ventilation system to remove steam and grease before it can be deposited;
- using drainage channels and drip trays to carry water, steam drips and waste away from tilting kettles, bratt pans and other equipment;
- positioning any 'messy' operations away from walkways and thoroughfares;
- preventing water being walked into the kitchen or service area on people's shoes from outdoors or indoors by providing suitable floor mats.

#### Put safe systems of work in place

- Don't allow things to boil over and contaminate the floor.
- Avoid contaminating the floor with dry materials (like plastic bags or flour dust), as they can create a very slippery surface.
- Organise the work to remove or reduce the need for people to rush or to turn sharply.
- Reduce the need for staff to carry, push or pull heavy or bulky loads by providing trolleys, carts or other manual handling aids.

#### The floor needs to have enough grip

- The floor keeps its grip when wet if it has enough surface roughness. If you don't clean it properly or often enough it loses that grip – good cleaning can bring it back.
- Proper floor surfaces can have enough slip resistance even when wet and oily, and can be cleaned to meet food hygiene requirements.
- Instruct staff how to use the right cleaning methods and materials for your particular floor surface. Ask the floor manufacturer about the best cleaning method, suitable detergents and the correct concentrations to use when cleaning. The time the detergent is on the floor has been shown to have the biggest effect on cleanliness.
- If these steps don't deal with the slip risk then you might need to use stick-on anti-slip strips or surface treatments to improve the slip resistance.
- Make sure that anti-slip strips don't cause new

tripping hazards.

Where it is not possible to improve slip resistance through other means it may become necessary to lay a new floor with better slip resistance. If you decide to do this, bear in mind the following:

- Specify a floor that will meet your needs, including sufficient slip resistance for normal working conditions, ease of cleaning and hygiene.
- If you are considering a particular type of floor, enquire about its suitability for your environment.
- Check that the floor is installed properly and matches your specification.
- When replacing a floor, it is an ideal time to design out any previous hazards that had been controlled by additional measures.

#### Check that steps, slopes and changes in level are safe

- Changes in level should be clearly visible.
- Steps and slopes should always have good grip.
- Slopes will require a higher degree of grip than level floors, particularly if heavy goods are carried or moved up or down them.
- Fit a handrail where necessary or use alternative routes when transporting particularly heavy or awkward loads.

#### Visibility and distractions can have a big effect on slip and trip risks

- Make sure that places where people walk are adequately lit and kept clear of hazards.

#### Deal with any wet or contaminated floors that do occur

- Clean up spillages **immediately**. This includes spills on any areas on the customer side (if applicable to your business). Don't forget satellite services or self-service areas.
- Avoid temporary solutions such as using cardboard to soak up spillages. Deal with them properly.
- Dry floors after cleaning them.
- If 'clean-to-dry' is completely impossible then use barriers and 'wet floor' warning signs to **keep people off the wet area**. Remember to remove wet floor signs when the floor is dry.
- Use cleaning methods that don't spread the

problem. It is usually better to deal with small spillages using a paper towel instead of a mop that wets the floor.

- Choose the timing of routine floor cleaning so people are not put at risk and hygiene is not compromised.

### **Training**

- You must train, inform and supervise staff on important health and safety matters such as the significance of spillages, 'cleaning as you go', reporting equipment defects, how to use and care for safety measures (including footwear), the importance of thorough cleaning and drying of floors, and reporting incidents as soon as they happen.

### **Selecting footwear**

Footwear can be important in preventing slips in the workplace and selecting the right shoe sole can have a big effect on reducing slip injuries. As a minimum, there should be a 'sensible shoe' policy in force. If, after all other reasonable steps have been taken to reduce the risks, a significant slip risk remains non-slip shoes may need to be provided.

- Speak to the manufacturer or supplier of the shoes to ensure they are suitable for the environment in your workplace.
- Different types of footwear can perform differently in different situations. Slip resistance of footwear does not scale with price; some inexpensive shoes can perform very well.
- Rubber soles offer more slip resistance on wet floors than polyurethane soles. But you should choose footwear after considering the specifics of your environment, the types of contaminants and work being carried out.
- Sole tread patterns make a difference to the slip resistance; finer cleats are better, though they should not become clogged with any waste or debris on the floor. If they do, that design of sole is unsuitable for your situation or you need to control the contamination that gets on the floor.
- If 'anti-slip' footwear is needed to properly control slip risks, the employer has to provide and pay for it as it would constitute personal protective equipment.

## **Preventing trips**

Obstructions on the floor and damaged or uneven floor surfaces cause most trip injuries. These can be prevented by properly organising the workplace, good housekeeping and good design and maintenance of floors, floor coverings, steps and walkways.

### **Organise the workplace**

- Arrange any workflows to avoid 'bottlenecks' in the work process.
- A well-organised goods in (or out) system may help, so that deliveries are not placed where they will obstruct where people walk.
- Make sure there is enough storage space for ingredients and equipment in daily use. Again, consider traffic patterns for frequently used items.
- Provide enough waste bins in convenient locations so that packaging, waste etc can be disposed of straight away.
- In large areas, mark out walkways to make it easier to see that they are being kept clear.
- Avoid trailing cables or pipes along the floor.
- Remember to check the customer side of the counter (if applicable to your business).

### **Good housekeeping**

- Don't allow articles to cause obstructions. Avoid putting pans, packages or wrappings on the floor where someone can trip over them.
- Instruct and train staff in good housekeeping practices.
- Periodically inspect the workplace to ensure traffic routes are unobstructed.
- Keep fire routes and exits clear at all times.

### **Uneven surfaces and changes in level**

- Inspect floors for holes, damage or unevenness (such as loose or broken tiles) where someone could trip.
- Highlight any changes in level and steps.
- Make any slopes on walkways gradual and clearly visible.
- Use high-visibility nosing strips on the edges of steps. (Make sure that they are securely fixed and not slippery.)

### Other anti-trip measures

- Ensure external areas of the building (such as bin stores and delivery areas) are free from tripping hazards.
- Ensure the workspace is adequately lit.
- Ensure external areas, particularly traffic routes, are adequately lit so that obstructions and changes in level are visible.

### Getting everyone involved

- Involve all employees in discussions of the risks and when agreeing the safety measures needed. With this approach, you are more likely to successfully tackle the hazard and get your employees to comply with any necessary action.
- Consult safety representatives, as they may identify problems or come up with solutions you may not have considered.
- Share the results of your risk assessment with employees.
- Make sure everyone working in an area has a good understanding of the correct way to work and the precautions needed.
- Supervise staff to make sure they are following instructions about safe practice.

### Training

- You must train, inform and supervise staff on health and safety matters such as the importance of reporting damaged floor surfaces, trip hazards from badly maintained floor coverings or equipment defects. Also how to use and care for safety measures (such as footwear), and the importance of reporting incidents as soon as they happen.

### Further reading

*Personal protective equipment (PPE) at work: A brief guide* Leaflet INDG174(rev2) HSE 2013 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg174.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg174.htm)

*Stop slips in kitchens: A good practice guide* Leaflet HSE 2007 [www.hse.gov.uk/slips/kitchens/goodpractice.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/slips/kitchens/goodpractice.pdf)

Catering and hospitality [www.hse.gov.uk/catering/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/catering/index.htm)

(These webpages include some useful case studies)

Health and safety made simple: The basics for your business [www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/index.htm)

Slips and Trips eLearning Package (STEP) [www.hse.gov.uk/slips/step/start.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/slips/step/start.htm)

(STEP is a free-to-use online tool developed by HSE providing slips and trips guidance through interactive learning. Completing this package will help your understanding of slips and trips, but to reduce accidents you will also need to take action in your workplace)

Slips and trips in kitchens [www.hse.gov.uk/slips/kitchens/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/slips/kitchens/index.htm)

### Further information

For information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit [www.hse.gov.uk/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/). You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.

This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory, unless specifically stated, and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance.

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