

The Glasgow School of Art

GSA Guide to Preventing Slips, Trips and Falls

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Policy Control

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1. Introduction

Data published by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) highlights that slips, trips and falls (on stairs and the level) are the most common cause of injury at work, accounting for over a third of major injuries to workers and over half of reported injuries to members of the public. It is therefore important that GSA implements management systems to eliminate or minimise risks from slips and trips.

This guidance note is intended to provide information on reducing the number of accidents and incidents involving slips, trips and falls on the same level. It is in place to protect the health and safety of all staff, students and members of the public, ensuring that GSA remains inclusive and accessible for all. Any member of staff/student requiring any support in relation to this guidance should speak to their line manager/programme leader in the first instance.

2. Risk Assessment

The risk of slips, trips and falls should be included in each departments general risk assessments (the general risk assessment form and procedure can be found on GSAs website). Regular risk assessment ensures the risks from slips, trips and falls are reduced or minimised. The HSE sets out a simple five step approach, departments should:

- a) Identify slip and trip hazards both inside and outside buildings (e.g. slippery floor coverings or stairs, obstructions, areas that may become wet or icy, areas that may become slippery because of algal growth)
- b) Decide who might be harmed, and how (e.g. staff, students, members of the public, contractors, also taking into account people especially at risk)
- c) Decide whether existing precautions in place are adequate to deal with the risks identified (if they are not, then take action to control the residual risks)
- d) Record the significant findings of the assessment
- e) Review the assessment if circumstances change and take further action if necessary

Through risk assessment and an effective management system GSA's aim is to:

- Identify areas which contain slip and trip hazards
- Devise a strategy for improvement
- Minimise slip and trip hazards through effective equipment and working procedures
- Make staff, student and others aware of slip and trip risks
- Give people safety responsibilities
- Ensure a record is kept of who is responsible for what
- Carry out regular checks to ensure that any safety procedures are being carried out properly
- Keep a record of cleaning and maintenance work

3. Factors contributing to slip, trips and falls

Some typical risk situations for slips, trips and falls, include unsafe stairs, unsafe ladders, slippery surfaces, walkway obstructions and poor lighting levels. The checklist provided as part of GSA's Health and Safety Monthly Premises Inspection Checklist asks departments to consider a number of factors that could contribute to slips, trips, and falls. The following list is more comprehensive and this should be considered when carrying out a general risk assessment:

a) Floors and other pedestrian traffic routes

- Are they suitable for purpose? (Slip resistant surfaces should be provided where necessary.)
- Are flooring materials correctly fitted and in good condition? (Holes, protrusions or other damage will need attention.)
- Are they correctly cleaned using the right cleaning product?
- Are smooth floors slip resistant or are slip-resistant finishes applied?
- Are changes of level avoided where possible, or highlighted?
- Are external traffic routes level and free from holes or obstructions?

b) Stairs

- Are handrails provided?
- Are steps of equal height and depth?
- Is the nosing in good condition, not slippery, and easily visible?

c) Ladders

- Is the ladder on a level surface?
- Is the ladder free from any modification, such as being painted, shortened etc?
- Are the stiles (upright) and rungs (steps) free from damage or excessive wear?
- Are all the rungs (steps) and fittings in place (e.g. slip resistant feet on metal ladders)?
- Are the rungs and stiles secure and free from movement?

Please see GSA's Guide to Safe Use of Ladders and Low Level Access Equipment for further guidance. This also includes a Ladder Pre-Use Inspection Checklist.

d) Surface contamination

- Is there occasional accidental spillage (e.g. from water/tea spillages)?
- Does it regularly arise from work activity (e.g. water spillages on kitchen floors, or oil leaks from machinery)?
- Does it foreseeably occur in adverse weather conditions (e.g. rainwater leaks; water or slush trodden into entrances)?
- Are mats used to effectively soak up water from shoes, or is there water on the floor beyond the mats?

- Is there a regular inspection and cleaning regime?

e) Human factors

- Are staff and students aware of their responsibility to clear up spillages and to report accidents, near misses, or dangerous conditions promptly to someone who will take action?
- Is there a system in place that would help them report such things? (The Estates Department Help Desk is able to deal with such conditions outside of buildings)
- Does the work activity increase the chance of slipping or tripping (e.g. carrying large items that obstruct the view)?
- Are people especially at risk who might be more likely to trip or slip, or more likely to suffer injury as a result (e.g. those with disabilities, the elderly, or children)?

f) Cleaning

- Is the correct cleaning product used?
- Is it used according to the manufacturer's instructions?
- Is access restricted until floors are completely dry? (Recently washed smooth floors will remain slippery even after they appear to have dried.)
- Are alternative pedestrian routes available until the floor is completely dry, or can it be cleaned in sections to maintain a dry route through the area?

g) Environmental factors

- Does a smooth floor become wet because of rainwater ingress (from leaks or from footwear)?
- Are outside surfaces free of algae, leaves, snow, or ice? (A regular inspection and cleaning programme should be established where this is a recognised problem.)
- Is the lighting adequate, both inside and outside buildings? (Excessive glare from poorly located lights may be as bad as insufficient light.)

h) General Housekeeping

- Are floors and stairs kept clear of obstructions (e.g. trailing cables, empty boxes, litter)?
- Is there enough storage space?

4. Summary of action required

Departments within schools and professional support areas:

- Review risk assessments relating to slips, trips and falls. Assessments should consider areas outside as well as inside buildings.
- Assess whether a regular inspection and cleaning regime that includes areas outside of buildings.

Staff and Students:

- If you have an accident or a near miss, make sure you report it promptly, to ensure that future accidents are avoided.
- If you see a spillage, clean it up or make arrangements for it to be cleaned.
- Report any damaged floors or mats.
- Play your part and keep the workplace tidy.
- If you see items on the floor where someone could trip over them, remove them or arrange for them to be removed or for the situation to be made safe.
- If you are given Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), wear it and look after it.
- Report any faults or damage and make arrangements for a replacement.
- Tell line manager/programme leader about any work situation that you think is dangerous, or if you notice that something has gone wrong with their health and safety arrangements.

5. Further Information

For further information, you should refer to GSA guidance, which can be accessed on the GSA webpage here: <http://www.gsa.ac.uk/about-gsa/key-information/occupational-health-and-safety/>

Specific GSA guidance that may be of help include the following:

- GSA Health and Safety Risk Assessment Procedure
- GSA Procedure for Monthly Departmental Health and Safety Inspections
- GSA Guide to Safe Use of Ladders and Low Level Access Equipment

Here are some **HSE** documents which may also give further guidance:

- Preventing slips and trips at work (a brief guide) - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg225.pdf>
- HSE has a free online learning tool, called the Slips and Trips eLearning Package, referred to as 'STEP' - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/slips/step/start.htm>
- Slips and trips Hazard spotting checklist - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ck4.pdf>
- Slips and trips mapping tool - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/slips/mappingtool.pdf>
- More information about managing slips and trips risks – including flooring, cleaning and footwear – is available on HSE's website: www.hse.gov.uk/slips/