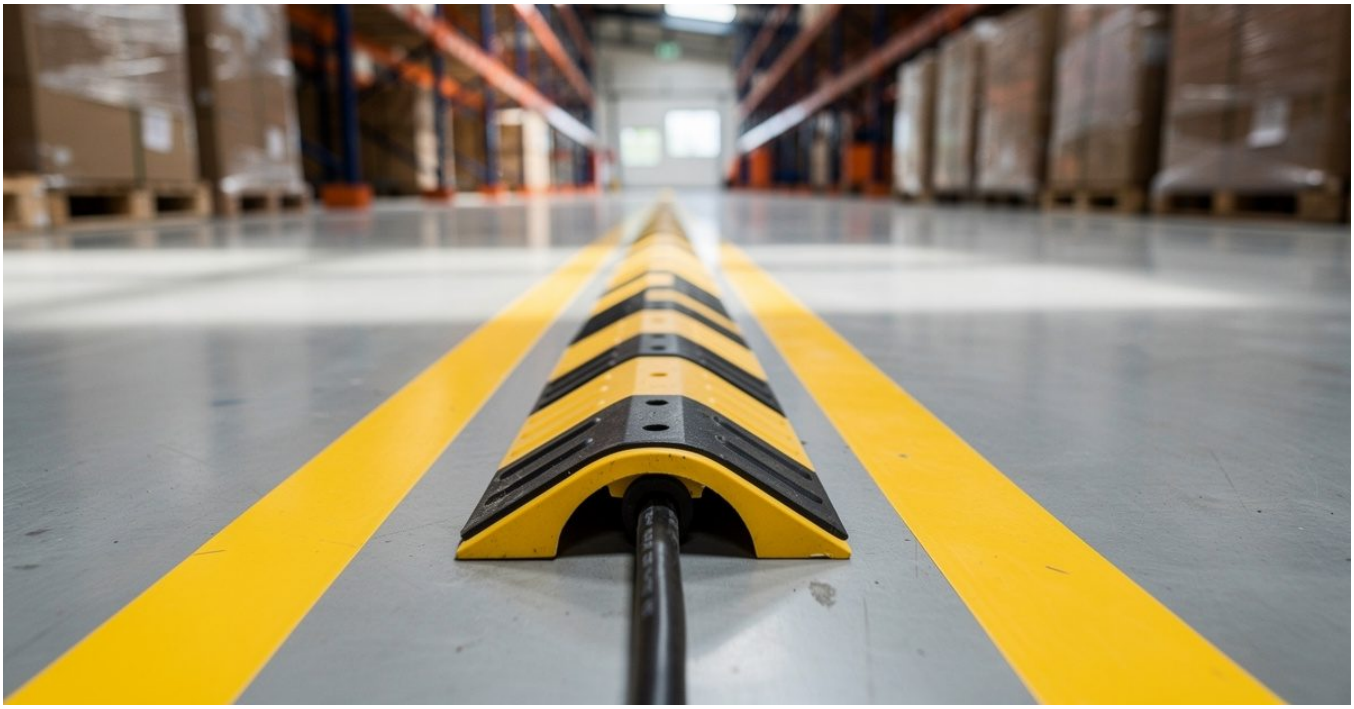
Slips, Trips and Falls at Work: Reducing Your Risk

Workplace Safety · Published 27 July 2026 by Integral Safety Ltd · integralsafetyltd.co.uk/blog/slips-trips-and-falls-at-work-reducing-your-risk



Why Slips, Trips and Falls Deserve Serious Attention

It is tempting to treat a slip or a trip as a minor nuisance. In reality, slips and trips on the same level are consistently among the most frequently reported causes of workplace injury across every sector in the UK. They cause broken bones, head injuries, sprains and, in some cases, serious long-term harm. They also cost businesses money through sick pay, lost productivity, insurance premiums and, in serious cases, enforcement action or civil claims.

If you manage a workplace of any kind, you have a legal duty to manage this risk properly. That means more than a laminated warning sign by a wet patch of floor. It means understanding where the hazards actually are, putting proportionate controls in place, and being able to show that you have done so. Falls from height are covered separately by the Work at Height Regulations 2005 and need their own assessment; this guide concentrates on slips and trips on the same level.

Your Legal Duties, and Who Holds Them

The core legal duty sits with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, which requires every employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees and anyone else affected by the work, such as visitors, contractors or customers. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 then require a suitable and sufficient risk assessment covering this and every other significant risk, with the findings recorded if you employ

five or more people.

More specifically, the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 deal directly with floors and traffic routes in most workplaces. Regulation 12 requires that floors and traffic routes can be used safely, which means floors free from holes and from uneven or slippery surfaces likely to cause a fall, and traffic routes kept free of obstructions so far as is reasonably practicable. These are legal minimums, not aspirations.

Responsibility for meeting these duties sits with the employer as a corporate body, but in practice it is usually delegated to a named director, site manager or responsible person who controls the budget for repairs and equipment. Line managers and supervisors handle day-to-day checks and make sure hazards are reported and dealt with promptly. Employees have a duty under section 7 of the 1974 Act to take reasonable care of their own safety and that of others, which includes reporting spillages, damaged flooring and trailing cables rather than walking past them.

Common Causes, and Why They Often Combine

The causes of slips and trips vary by sector, but certain patterns recur almost everywhere:

- Wet or contaminated floors from spillages, cleaning, leaks or rain tracked in from outside
- Poor housekeeping, including trailing cables, boxes left in walkways and cluttered storage areas
- Inadequate lighting that makes changes in floor level or obstacles hard to see
- Damaged or uneven flooring, worn tiles, raised edges and potholes in yards and car parks
- Unsuitable footwear for the environment, particularly in wet or oily areas
- Worn, undersized or poorly fitted entrance matting
- Rushing or distraction, especially in busy or target-driven environments

Incidents rarely have a single cause. A wet floor in a dimly lit corridor, with staff under time pressure and wearing the wrong footwear, is far more dangerous than any one of those factors alone. That is why the assessment should look at the combination of factors in each area, not tick off hazards one at a time.

What a Proper Risk Assessment Looks Like

A slips and trips risk assessment does not need to be long, but it does need to be specific to your workplace. Walk the site with fresh eyes, ideally at different times of day and, for entrances and yards, in different weather. Look at each area in turn: the floor surface, likely contaminants, lighting levels, foot traffic and typical footwear. Speak to the people who work there every day; they usually know exactly where the problem spots are, even if nobody has ever formally raised them.

The assessment should record the hazards identified, who might be harmed, the existing controls, and any further action needed with a named person and a deadline. Review it regularly, for example once a year, and sooner after a change such as new flooring, a change of use in a space or a refurbishment, or after any incident or near miss. Where vulnerable people use the premises, as

in care settings and schools, consider reviewing more often, because the consequences of a fall can be more severe.

Practical Control Measures

Floor Surfaces and Maintenance

Match the floor surface to the environment. Kitchens, workshops and entrance lobbies need genuine slip resistance, not just a smooth finish that looks clean. Inspect flooring regularly and repair damage promptly. A simple maintenance log, recording the defect, the date reported and the date fixed, shows that you act on problems rather than ignore them.

Housekeeping and Cleaning

Good housekeeping is one of the cheapest and most effective controls available. Set clear expectations that walkways stay clear, equipment goes back into storage, and spillages are reported and cleaned immediately. Where cleaning leaves a wet surface, use warning signage and, where practical, clean in sections so a dry route is always available, avoiding busy corridors at peak footfall.

Lighting, Matting and Drainage

Make sure work areas, corridors, stairwells and external routes are properly lit, and fix failed lighting promptly. Entrance matting should be the right type, size and condition for the volume of traffic; matting that is too small or worn can itself become a trip hazard. In wet-process areas, drainage channels and correctly graded floors reduce standing water.

Footwear and Training

Where footwear is identified as a factor, particularly in catering, manufacturing and construction, consider a footwear policy or providing suitable safety footwear. Make sure slips and trips are covered in induction training, and build in periodic refreshers. Creating a culture where staff report hazards immediately, without fear of blame, matters as much as any physical control.

Monitoring, Records and Reporting

Controls that look good on paper can still fail if nobody checks them. Encourage near-miss reporting; a near miss is free information about a hazard before it causes an injury, and should be investigated with the same seriousness as an actual accident. Build a check of floors, walkways and housekeeping standards into your routine workplace inspections, and keep dated records of what was checked and what action followed.

If an injury does occur, investigate it properly to understand what went wrong and what needs to change; our accident investigation service can support this where an incident is serious or the cause is not obvious. Some injuries from a fall must be reported to the relevant enforcing authority under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR). These include most fractures and injuries that leave a worker unable to do their normal work for more than seven consecutive days. Injuries to people who are not employees, such as visitors, are

reportable where they are taken from the scene to hospital for treatment. Keep risk assessments, inspection logs, maintenance, training and incident records together and retrievable, as evidence that you manage this risk properly.

How Integral Safety Can Help

Managing slips, trips and falls well takes a consistent approach to risk assessment, inspection and training across every part of the site, not just the obvious areas. Integral Safety delivers practical health and safety consultancy and workplace auditing and inspections that identify real risks in settings such as care homes, warehousing and logistics sites and construction premises, and help you put proportionate controls in place. We work with businesses across the East Midlands from our base in Coalville, Leicestershire. If you would like a second opinion on your current arrangements, contact us to arrange an initial conversation.

Talk to Integral Safety Ltd

We are health and safety consultants based in Coalville, Leicestershire, working with businesses across the East Midlands. If anything in this guide applies to your workplace, we can help.

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This guide is general information about UK health and safety law and practice, correct as at 11 November 2026. It is not advice on your particular circumstances. The latest version is at https://integralsafetyltd.co.uk/blog/slips-trips-and-falls-at-work-reducing-your-risk.