



# Slips, trips and falls café and restaurant industry

The purpose of this bulletin is to identify risks and suggest possible control measures to assist retailers in meeting their obligations under the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984*.

## Identified slip, trip and fall hazards and possible controls

Slips, trips and falls are among the most common hazards in the café and restaurant industry. Industry injury data shows that kitchen hands, cooks, waiters and chefs across all age categories sustain the highest number of slip, trip and fall injuries. Most of the injuries occur from falls on the same level and are due to oily/slippery floors and obstructions resulting in fractures, sprains, bruises and cuts.

### Slippery floors

In the café and restaurant industry, floors with oil or water spills are the greatest cause of slip, trip and fall injuries. High-risk areas are cool rooms/freezers, dishwashing areas, cooking areas and doors leading to and from the kitchen where changes in floor surfaces occur.

There are several simple ways of minimising the risk of slips and falls in these areas.

#### Elimination of spillage

Fat collection systems from cooking areas. For the movement of oil, there are several mechanical aids that may be of assistance. Examples include mechanical oil transport systems, or pumps that move the oil without actually having to handle it.

Minimising spills by design. Sinks and troughs should be designed to avoid water dripping onto the floor.

#### Environmental design

Install non-slip floor surfaces:

- Non-slip tiles - especially areas easily contaminated by oil and water.
- Floor treatments.
- Non-slip mats.
- Drainage in wet areas.

#### Engineering controls

For longer distances, trolleys should be used to reduce the risk of spills and manual handling hazards.

#### Administrative controls

Cleaning floors - effective scheduling and adequate frequency.



Mechanical fat transport system

Transporting fluids - where mechanical aids are not practical, the fluid should be transported in a suitable container, such as a bucket with sturdy handle and secure lid.

Appropriate footwear to be used by persons working in these areas.

### Changes in floor levels

There are several simple ways of minimising the risk of trips and falls as a result of changes in floor levels. These include:

#### Elimination

Although it is not always practical to eliminate a change in floor levels in an existing kitchen, as part of a redesign or refit, eliminating this risk factor would be the preferred control option.

#### Environmental design

Small ramps may be an effective way of graduating the change in floor levels, to reduce the risk.

#### Administrative controls

Bright markings and warning signs are examples of how changes in levels may be clearly indicated.

When changes in floor levels are combined with changes in surfaces, slippery floors or inadequate lighting and manual handling tasks, the risk of injury becomes much greater. This risk can be controlled by ensuring that the lighting is good and the floor levels have non-slip tiles and non-slip mats. These areas should be kept clear of fluids or any other obstruction that might cause a person to slip, trip or fall.

### Obstructions

There are several simple ways of minimising the risk of trips and falls as a result of obstructions. These include controls such as:

#### Environmental design

Providing appropriate storage design and space:

- Where possible, items and equipment should be stored in appropriate storage areas and not blocking walkways, emergency exits or restricting access to other items.
- Workflow should be considered when designing the access to storage areas.

#### Housekeeping

Make sure:

- Items such as flattened cardboard boxes are not used as floor mats, as they are a slip, trip and fall hazard.
- Walkways are kept clear of obstacles especially during peak work times.
- Waste/rubbish is removed regularly from work areas.

## Reducing other slip, trip and fall hazards

Make sure:

- All floor surfaces are stable, even and non-slip.
- A regular cleaning procedure is in place to keep floors clean of spilt water, oil and fat.
- Lighting levels are adequate.
- Signs are visible to warn employees and customers of slippery floors.

## What the law says

Employers have a responsibility under the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984* (the Act) to provide and maintain a safe working environment. Fulfilling this obligation includes abiding by the requirement that it is the responsibility of the employer to, as far as practicable:

- identify each hazard to which a person is likely to be exposed;
- assess the risk of injury or harm to a person resulting from each hazard;
- consider the means by which that risk may be reduced; and
- reduce the risk.

Employees have a responsibility under the Act to take reasonable care for their own safety and health and that of others.

Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996 have specific requirements regarding:

- Movement around workplaces – Regulation 3.6
- Warning signs – Regulation 3.11
- Lighting – Regulation 3.13
- Surfaces and floors – Regulation 3.18

### More information?

Further information on the manual handling risk management process can be found in the:

- *Code of practice: Manual tasks*; and
- *Manual handling in the café and restaurant industry - Bulletin*.

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