

STOP & THINK

Week 18 – Slips, Trips & Falls



How often have you said ‘that was a close shave’? As outlined in GBM’s recent alert on the One Safety Hub, [slips and trips are the most common of workplace hazards and make up over a third of all major injuries](#). Over 10,000 workers suffered serious injury because of a slip or trip last year. Slips and trips can happen almost anywhere. A large number of slips and trips result in broken bones and they can also be the initial cause for a range of other types of accident such as a fall from height. Slips and trips are responsible for, on average:

- over a third of all reported major injuries
- 20% of over-3-day injuries to employees
- 2 fatalities per year

As outlined in B&V’s Toolbox Talk 024 – Good Housekeeping in PROSYS “[Many accidents are caused or aggravated by untidy conditions](#) on site. There is a [duty for all](#) of us to keep our workplace in [good order](#). [Good housekeeping](#) is essential in running a [safe office or site](#).”.

In the [office](#) environment, how often do we ignore that bit of water on the floor near the kitchen sink, or the bit of paper on the floor near the photocopier, or the lever arch file half hanging over a desk etc. All these are hazards are waiting for an unsuspecting person. As designers that’s our working environment. Here’s some pointers towards a [good working environment](#):

- Never rely on others to clean up for you, it is your responsibility.
- Always place trailing electric cables and hoses away from walkways
- Clean up spills liable to cause slips immediately.
- Put rubbish into bins provided.
- Keep walkways clear
- Always remember that a tidy office or site is safer and happier to work in. Untidy offices and sites have the most accidents.

But what about the working environment we design for others? During [construction](#) there was recently an accident at one of our sites whereby a site operative was in an excavation, turned around and taken 2 paces to grab his spade, only to slip backwards on the clay, landing on his right shoulder. The impact with the ground when falling caused his neck to jar. Fortunately he returned to work the next day. However, that was an environment that was introduced through the design. Could alternative construction methodology have been used? Would a different methodology introduce new risks? These are the types of considerations we as designers (and within the Lot B programme, as an EPC team) must consider, and capture within the Design Hazard Register.

What about the environment when we leave a site after [Take-Over](#). Examples may include concrete plinth being slightly higher than the normal height, the cable tray running to a local control panel, an above ground pipe, a new grass bank etc. These are the conditions that the operatives or supply chain will have to deal with; access to the valves, cutting the grass etc. We as designers are setting the conditions and environment for future workers. It is key we get the conditions right with an emphasis of minimising the risks associated with slips, trips and falls. We need to ensure lighting levels are sufficient, good access routes, avoiding introducing hazards such as steep grass banks.

For further information:

B&V iNet (PROSYS)

Tool Box Talk 024 – Good Housekeeping

One Safety Hub

<http://www.onesafetyhub.co.uk/Partners/Gbm/Lists/OSHLibrary/gbm-alert-slips-trips-and-falls.pdf>

HSE

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/slips/index.htm>

“Isn’t preventing trip injuries really just a question of good housekeeping?”

‘Yes’ is the short answer to this question. Keeping areas where people walk free from obstructions, debris and misplaced items and making sure that they are kept in good condition with no holes or unevenness undoubtedly reduces trip injuries. This does mean getting the co-operation of the workforce, staff need to be involved in setting good housekeeping standards for their working environment, it is difficult to achieve good housekeeping without workforce co-operation. Be sure that it is actually possible for staff to work to good housekeeping standards. Have enough space for items to be properly stored rather than placed on the floor, have walkways and thoroughfares clearly identified, have a system for damage reporting and repair and challenge bad housekeeping practice when it occurs. Making sure that any slopes or changes in level are clearly visible are also straightforward and sensible measures.”

Guidance document INDG 225 - Preventing Slips and Trips at Work: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg225.pdf>

Want to know more about the associated law: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/slips/law.htm>

A question or two to get you thinking!

Without realising have you introduced a trip, slip or fall hazard in one of your design ?