



Ministry of Labour, Human Resource  
Development & Training

**MINISTRY OF LABOUR, HUMAN RESOURCE  
DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING**

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH DIVISION


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**Guidelines on prevention of slips,  
trips and falls at the workplace**

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# **Guidelines on prevention of slips, trips and falls at the workplace**

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## **1.0 SCOPE**

The aim of these guidelines is to provide practical guidance for the identification, assessment, prevention and control of the hazards and risks associated with slips and trips on the same level in the workplace so that employees are able to move around the workplace safely.

## **2.0 EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Slips, trips and falls can happen anywhere and are among the most common causes of numerous accidents, injuries or even deaths in workplaces. According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) (HSE, 2020), slips and trips are the most common cause of injury at work and on average, they cause over a third of all major injuries and can lead to other types of accidents, such as falls from height or falls into machinery.

In Mauritius, the analysis of non fatal occupational accidents reported to the Occupational Safety and Health Division for the year 2021 has shown, out of 176 occupational accidents reported, 56 were due to falls which represents 31.8 % of all non-fatal accidents occurred. Among the 56 cases due to falls, 18 cases were fall from height and 38 cases were fall from same level which represents 32.1% and 67.9 % respectively.

Addressing issues of slips, trips and falls at the workplace requires commitment from one and all. In this context, implementation of a proper Occupational Safety and Health Management System plays a

crucial role. Furthermore, there is a need to implement a continuous positive safety and culture at the level of the enterprise through regular training and information dissemination. Change in culture is an important catalyst in enhancing safety and health culture at the workplace.

### 3.0 DEFINITION

Technically speaking, slips, trips and falls are three separate things. **Slips** are the result of too little friction or a lack of traction between the footwear and the floor surface. Common causes include:

- wet or oily surface,
- occasional spills,
- weather hazards,
- inappropriate footwear,
- flooring or other walking surfaces that do not have the same degree of traction in all areas.

A **trip** is the result of a foot striking or colliding with an object resulting in a loss in balance.

Common causes include:

- obstructed views,
- poor lighting,
- clutter in the way,
- wrinkled carpeting,
- unanchored cables,

- bottom drawers not being closed,
- uneven (steps, thresholds) walking surfaces.

Both slip and trip can cause a **fall**. However, **falls** may occur because of a missing support, such as guardrails or handhold or missing steps (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, 2018).

## **4.0 LEGAL PROVISIONS**

**The main legal provisions governing issues related to slip and trip hazards include the following provisions:-**

### **4.1 Occupational Safety and Health Act 2005:**

#### **4.1.1 *Section 5 (2) (a)(iii)***

Under this section, the employer has to, so far as is reasonably practicable, maintain any place of work under his control, including the means of access to, or egress from it, safe and without risks to health.

#### **4.1.2 *Section 10***

This section requires every employer to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of any risk to the safety and health to which any employee is exposed whilst he is at work and to review the assessment not later than 2 years or earlier.



### **4.1.3 Section 34 (1)**

Where an employee has to work in, or in the course of his work pass through, any part of a building, such part of the building shall be of sound construction and kept in a good state of repair.

### **4.1.4 Section 34 (3)**

Where any process is carried on which renders the floor of a building liable to be wet to such an extent that the wetness is capable of being removed by drainage, effective means shall be provided and maintained for draining off any liquid from that floor.

### **4.1.5 Section 35 (2) (a) & (b)**

This section requires the employer to cause accumulation of dirt, refuse or trade waste to be removed daily from the floors and benches of workrooms and from the staircases and passages, and cause the floor of every workroom to be cleaned at least once every week.

### **4.1.6 Section 38 (1)**

Effective provision shall be made for securing and maintaining sufficient and suitable lighting, whether natural or artificial, in every part of a place of work in which persons are working or passing.

### **4.1.7 Section 82 (1)**

Where any process carried out at a place of work is likely to cause bodily injury and such bodily injury cannot be prevented by other means, every person employed in that process and liable to such bodily injury, shall be provided with such suitable and appropriate

personal protective equipment and clothing as will protect him from risk of injury.

## **4.2 Occupational Safety and Health (Foundries and Construction Works) Regulations 2019**

### ***4.2.1 Regulation 4(1)***

This regulation requires the employer to provide and properly maintain, for the protection of all persons employed on manual operations involving molten metal with which they are liable to be splashed, a working space, for the operations, which is adequate for the safe performance of the work and is free from any obstruction.

### ***4.2.2 Regulation 6 (1)***

Any raw materials and dies, patterns, pattern plates, core boxes, core plates, grids, moulding boxes, loam plates and ladles, and all other heavy equipment, shall be so arranged and placed as to enable work to be carried on without unnecessary risk.

### ***4.2.3 Regulation 6 (2)***

Suitable and conveniently accessible racks, bins or other receptacles shall be provided and used for the storage of gear and tools.

#### ***4.2.4 Regulation 11 (a)***

This regulation requires the employer to cause every stairway, passageway, gangway, basement and any such other place to be adequately lighted and kept free from any obstruction.

### ***4.3 Occupational Safety and Health (Ship Construction and Ship Repairs) Regulations 2013***

#### ***4.3.1 Regulation 10 (b)***

This regulation requires the employer to ensure that any passageway, scaffold, platform or other elevated working surface is kept free from slipping hazard.

#### ***4.3.2 Regulation 10 (c)***

This regulation requires the employer to ensure that all passageways, stairs, platforms and other means of access or places of work are kept free from debris or protruding objects or any other obstructions that may cause tripping.

### 4.3.3 Regulation 12

This section requires the employer to ensure that there is sufficient and suitable general lighting, whether natural or artificial, whenever any person is at work; and in the event of a power failure affecting the general lighting, emergency lighting which is sufficient in intensity and distribution to allow for the safe evacuation or rescue of persons.

## 5.0 CAUSES OF SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS

In general, slips, trips, and falls result from the unintended or unexpected change in the contact between the feet or footwear and the walking or working surface or inadvertent contact with a fixed or moveable object which may eventually lead to a fall. Slips and trip hazards may be associated with the following:

### (a) **Poor Housekeeping and Maintenance Practices**

- Accumulation of waste,
- Improper storage of material and equipment,
- Spills,
- Extension cords, conduits, cables, and hoses across walking surfaces,

- Loose and unsecured floor mats, carpets, and coverings,
- Damaged or missing flooring materials,
- Stairs and ramps with loose or missing handrails,
- Drains not provided with covers or gratings,
- Inadequate lighting.

(b) **Poor Walking and Working Surface Conditions**

- Slippery, wet or icy walking surfaces (in coldrooms),
- Uneven walking surfaces,
- Surface changes such as carpet to tile or level to sloped or uneven heights (steps),
- Surface protrusions or depressions such as thresholds, cover plates and gratings.

(c) **Poor Work Practices**

- Wearing inappropriate footwear for the task,
- Carrying items that obstruct view,
- Rushing to complete work.

(d) **Inappropriate Personal Behaviour**

- Not maintaining 3 points of contact ( handhold, foothold and visual) on staircase,
- Wearing improperly fitted, loose, or undone footwear,
- Cutting through areas not designated or intended as walkways,
- Horseplay and running in the workplace,
- Not taking due care while at work.

**6.0 CONSEQUENCES OF SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS**

Serious slips or trips together with the resulting falls may result in:

- sprains or strains,
- fractures when trying to break the fall,
- a back injury due to the sudden and forceful impact during a fall,
- burns if it occurs near hot surfaces or if the person is handling hot fluids, chemicals, etc,
- lacerations if it occurs near sharp objects,
- disabilities and fatalities.

In addition to injuries sustained by workers, there are financial, physical and psychological costs for the injured worker and their family. A workplace injury often affects injured workers by restricting their usual home and leisure activities.

## 7.0 PREVENTING SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS AT THE PLACE OF WORK

In order to be able to prevent injuries related to slips, trips and falls, it is important to conduct a proper risk assessment of tasks and activities before work starts. A **risk assessment** is a careful examination of factors in the work which could cause harm to people. An effective risk assessment at the workplace can be carried out by following these steps:

- Identifying the hazards that could cause accidents by considering the load, the task, the environment and the workers;
- Deciding who might be harmed and how by evaluating the potential consequences of the hazards;
- Determining whether existing precautions are adequate or whether additional control measures needs to be implemented to eliminate or minimize the risk; and
- Monitoring the risks, and review preventive measures.

## **(a) Hazard Identification**

Identifying hazards is the first step to determine exactly where slips, trips and falls can occur or have occurred in your workplace. Such information can be obtained by talking to workers and supervisors, inspecting the premises, and reviewing records such as incident and injury reports. A slips and trips hazard identification checklist is at Annex 1.

Another useful activity is to sketch a layout of the work area and mark on it where slip and trip incidents or hazards have been reported.

## **(b) Evaluation of the risk**

The next step is to assess the slip or trip risks. Usually it is a combination of factors that create the risk.

As part of the risk assessment the following should also be considered:

- how many people are exposed.
- the consequences of the slip or trip – a slip or trip with or without a fall can be more serious if it occurs near hot, sharp or moving objects, or at a height, such as near stairs.
- how often the situation occurs.



### (c) Control measures

The assessed risks should be analysed and decision should be taken on the urgency of the control measures that needs to be implemented quickly to eliminate or reduce the risks. The hierarchy of control is usually used in eliminating or reducing the risk.

*Table 1 – Control measures*

<b>Hierarchy of controls</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>Eliminate the hazard</b>	Remove slip and trip hazards at the design stage such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Eliminate changes in floor levels;</li><li>• Install more power outlets through the floor and ceiling to avoid trailing cords.</li></ul>
<b>Substitution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Resurface floors.</li></ul>
<b>Isolation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limit access to high risk areas.</li></ul>

<p><b>Engineering Controls</b> (Minimise risk by redesigning)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply floor treatments to increase slip resistance;</li> <li>• Stop leaks from equipment or pipes;</li> <li>• Provide adequate drainage to prevent pooling of contaminants;</li> <li>• Clearly mark edges of steps and any changes in floor height;</li> <li>• Improve lighting</li> </ul>
<p><b>Administrative controls</b></p>	<p>Implement good housekeeping practices such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear access ways;</li> <li>• Prompt spills management;</li> <li>• Use of appropriate signage or barricades for areas likely to cause slip/trip and fall;</li> <li>• Training and supervision.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Personal protective equipment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wear suitable footwear compliant with existing standards.</li> </ul>

#### **(d) Monitoring and reviewing**

It is important to check whether the controls in place are effective, being used correctly, and have not introduced new hazards or risks. This can be done by talking to the employees, observing work activities, undertaking walk-through surveys, during inspections and reviewing accidents reports.

#### **(e) Risk Management Plan**

Other issues that should be considered in the risk management plan include design, maintenance, consultation, training and record keeping.

##### **(i) *Design***

Prevention of slips, trips and falls starts with good design of the workplace. When fitting out new premises/extensions or refurbishing the workplace, incorporate features to prevent slips and trips. When commissioning or purchasing new equipment, as well as ensuring that it is safe, adequate containment of any possible by-product such as off-cuts, grease, and dust should be provided.

## **(ii) *Maintenance***

This is fundamental to ensure that control measures remain effective. For slips and trips prevention, the following should be ensured:

- good condition of floor and ground surfaces, stairs and ramps,
- prevent leaks from machinery,
- adequate lighting,
- provision of suitable footwear to provide adequate grip.

## **(iii) *Consultation and discussion***

Before changes are made to facilities and processes, or equipment is purchased, there should be consultations and discussion with employees about changes in the work area.

## **(iv) *Training***

All employees should have good understanding of slips and trips hazards and how they can play their part in preventing them. For example, provide training to employees on the risks and control strategies that have been implemented, including relevant procedures for cleaning and hazard reporting.

## **(v) *Record keeping***

All areas assessed and actions taken through the slips, trips and falls risk management worksheet, should be taken including specifications of plant and work processes, incident reports and actions taken, maintenance records of equipment and tools, and records of training activities.

## **8.0 CONCLUSION**

These guidelines will help employers manage slips and trips hazards and prevent falls at the workplace. The slips and trips hazard spotting checklist at annex can be used to identify hazards and implement appropriate measures.

9.0 ANNEX

*Common Slips and Trips Hazards*

<b>SLIPS AND TRIPS HAZARD SPOTTING CHECKLIST</b>		
<b>Potential issue</b>	<b>Tick if 'yes'</b>	<b>Suggested action</b>
<b>1. Outdoor areas</b>		
Can anything be found on the paths, steps and fire escapes that could cause slips, e.g. build-up of leaves, wet grass, moss, mud etc?		Set up a regular work schedule for clearing paths, tackle busy routes first.  Consider cutting back plants and trees that overlap paths.
Are there any changes in level on the path that are not easy to see, e.g. small slopes?		Highlight hazard – improve lighting, apply contrasting eye-catching colour to slope (e.g. non-slip paint, flush-fitting bolt-on material).
Are there holes, potholes, or uneven paving on footpaths?		Barrier off area as a temporary solution, ensure barriers cannot be easily moved. Highlight hazard, e.g. improve lighting, use eye-catching colour on defective area as a temporary solution.  Maintenance required – fill in holes, re-lay paving, replace broken paving stones.

Are fire escapes slippery when wet?		Improve grip – consider applying slip-resistant coating/strips or bolt-on slip-resistant material (caution – do not create a trip hazard).
<b>2. Doorway</b>		
Is the floor between the building threshold (entrance) and the entrance matting slippery when wet?		Improve grip – consider extending mat or exterior paving, applying slip-resistant coating/strips or changing to more slip-resistant material.
<b>3. Entrances</b>		
Is there water on the floor from rain etc?  Is it making the floor slippery?		<p>Stop water entering building – construct canopies over entrances, improve external drainage, keep doors closed when you can.</p> <p>Prevent water spreading – fit large and absorbent entrance mats to dry shoes.</p> <p>Remove water quickly – review cleaning system, introduce dry mopping, consider fitting slip-resistant flooring.</p>
Are there any trip hazards in the area, e.g. trailing cables, deliveries, mats with curled up edges, or other objects?		Housekeeping needed – tidy away cables, provide safe delivery storage area, clear away boxes and equipment, fix down mat edges or replace if necessary

#### 4. Corridors and offices

Are there any subtle changes in floor level, e.g. slopes, small steps, abrupt changes from one flooring material to another?

Highlight hazard – improve lighting, use eye-catching colour on slope/step, clearly highlight change from one flooring material to another



## SLIPS AND TRIPS HAZARD SPOTTING CHECKLIST

Potential issue	Tick if 'yes'	Suggested action
Are the floors smooth in areas where contamination can be found on the floor (e.g. liquids, food and food wrappers, dusts, polythene, condensation etc?)		<p>Stop contamination from getting onto floor – provide bins for litter, fix leaks, fit lids on containers, close doors leading from working areas.</p> <p>Prevent spreading – drip trays beneath plants/machines/water coolers.</p> <p>Remove contamination quickly – review cleaning system, spot clean spills, dry mop large wet areas, vacuum/brush up dry materials.</p>
<p>Are the tiles or flooring becoming unstuck or curling at the edges?</p> <p>Are there holes?</p>		Maintenance required – fix down tiles and carpet edges, replace if necessary, fill in holes, replace cracked tiles.
Is the anti-slip floor coating or grip tape worn smooth or damaged?		<p>Maintenance required – replace damaged and worn coatings.</p> <p>Consider changing flooring.</p>
Are there any trip hazards around workstations or in corridors and walkways, eg trailing cables, boxes, deliveries, equipment or other objects?		Housekeeping needed – keep walkways clear, tidy away or use cable covers, provide additional storage, clear away boxes and equipment.

Are light levels too low to see the floor surface clearly?		Improve lighting – new bulbs, additional lights.
Is light reflecting on the smooth flooring creating glare?		Improve lighting – re-angle lights, install blinds or anti-glare grills or glazing films.  Consider removing floor surface shine.
<b>5. Stairs and ramps</b>		
Are step nosings (edge of step) hard to see, rounded, damaged or slippery?		Check lighting is sufficient to see step edges clearly.  Highlight the very edge of the step with a nosing that has a high visibility, square edge and non-slip finish.  For difficult to replace round-edged nosing, ensure non-slip edging wraps right around the edge of the nosing.
Are handrails available?  Are they easy to reach and useable		Provide a handrail.
Is the height (rise) of the steps or depth of tread (going) inconsistent throughout the flight?		Highlight the problem, e.g. with warning notice.  Correct the rise/going of the stairs so they are all of equal height.

<p>Are the stair treads slippery?</p>		<p>Thoroughly clean on a regular basis to remove contaminants.</p> <p>Replace stair covering with one with better slip resistance.</p>
<p>Are any ramps or slopes in or around the workplace difficult to see?</p>		<p>Highlight ramp with contrasting colour and check lighting levels.</p> <p>Improve grip – consider fitting slip-resistant flooring.</p> <p>As with flights of stairs, consider providing handrails</p>
<p>Are any ramps or slopes in or around the workplace difficult to see?</p>		<p>Highlight ramp with contrasting colour and check lighting levels.</p> <p>Improve grip – consider fitting slip-resistant flooring.</p> <p>As with flights of stairs, consider providing handrails</p>

## SLIPS AND TRIPS HAZARD SPOTTING CHECKLIST

Potential issue	Tick if 'yes'	Suggested action
<p><b>6. Work areas and work platforms (e.g. kitchens, warehouses, storerooms)</b></p>		
<p>As part of the work process, is contamination (fluids, solids, dust, debris etc) getting onto the floor?</p> <p>Is the floor slippery?</p> <p>People – spillages, overfilling containers, clearing waste off work surfaces onto the floor, discarding debris onto the floor.</p> <p>Machines – leaks, overspray, spills, by-product.</p> <p>Process – overspills, leaks, by products</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Stop contamination from getting onto floor – change system of work, improve work area layout, provide bins, dust extraction, lids on containers, reduce quantity of product in containers, fix leaking machinery.</p> <p>Prevent contamination spreading – use drip trays, screens to stop splashes, good floor drainage, high-lipped sinks, bunding around machines.</p> <p>Remove contamination quickly – spot clean spills, dry mop large wet areas, vacuum/brush up dry materials.</p> <p>Improve grip – consider slip-resistant flooring; provide slip resistant footwear.</p>
<p>Is condensation forming on the floor?</p> <p>Is condensation forming on overhead pipework and dripping onto the floor.</p> <p>Is the floor slippery?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Improve ventilation – use extraction.</p> <p>Insulate overhead pipework.</p> <p>Improve grip – consider slip-resistant flooring; provide slip-resistant footwear.</p>
<p>Is poor drainage causing a pooling of fluids on the floor?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Improve floor drainage.</p>

<p>Cold store – is there ice build-up</p> <p>On the floor?</p> <p>Is the floor slippery?</p>		<p>Remove ice.</p> <p>Door maintenance – check door closes and seals properly – replace seals, fix door and frame.</p> <p>Prevent humidity, e.g. fit automatic doors, curtains, humidity controls.</p> <p>Consider supplying slip-resistant footwear.</p>
<p>Are walkways uneven, do they have holes or missing tiles?</p>		<p>Barrier off area as a temporary solution, ensure barriers cannot be easily moved.</p> <p>Highlight hazard, e.g. improve lighting, use eye-catching colour on defective area as a temporary solution.</p> <p>Maintenance required – fill in holes, relay/replace defective flooring.</p>
<p>Are there any raised carpet edges or holes?</p>		<p>Firmly stick down raised or loose edges.</p> <p>Maintenance required – replace all or damaged section of carpet.</p>
<p>Are the tiles or flooring becoming unstuck or curling at the edges?</p>		<p>Firmly stick down loose tiles and raised edges.</p> <p>Maintenance required – replace all or damaged section of flooring.</p>
<p>Are there any trip hazards around workstations, e.g. trailing cables, boxes, deliveries or other objects?</p>		<p>Encourage a ‘see it, sort it’ mentality among staff.</p> <p>Housekeeping needed – keep walkways clear, tidy away or use cable covers, provide additional storage, clear away boxes and equipment.</p>

## SLIPS AND TRIPS HAZARD SPOTTING CHECKLIST

Potential issue	Tick if 'yes'	Suggested action
<p>Are light levels too low to see clearly?</p> <p>Is light bouncing off the flooring creating glare?</p>		<p>Improve lighting – new bulbs, re-angle, additional lights, install antiglare grills.</p> <p>Stop glare – consider removing floor surface shine.</p>
<b>7. Cleaning</b>		
<p>Are spillages left on the floor for some time before they are cleaned up?</p>		<p>Encourage a 'see it, sort it' mentality among staff.</p> <p>Ensure spills cleaning equipment is readily available for use.</p> <p>Review/improve cleaning regime and timings of cleaning schedule.</p> <p>Consider introducing a roving cleaner.</p>
<p>Are small spills wet mopped?</p>		<p>Spot clean small spills using absorbent cloth/paper towel.</p> <p>Provide training and then supervise.</p> <p>Ensure spills cleaning equipment is readily available for use.</p>

<p>Can people walk through areas during wet mopping or when floors are still wet?</p> <p>Is the floor smooth or slippery when wet?</p>		<p>Keep people off smooth wet floors – Barrier off/close off areas, wet mop out of hours when no-one is around.</p> <p>Reduce drying time – dry mop the floors with a clean, proprietary dry mop.</p>
<p>Are warning signs left out long after the spill has gone and floor has dried?</p>		<p>Remove cones and signs as soon as cleaning is completed and floor is dry.</p> <p>Provide training and then supervise.</p>
<p>Does the floor look dirty even though it has just been cleaned?</p>		<p>Check manufacturers’/suppliers’ cleaning instructions are being followed.</p> <p>Review floor cleaning method, alter to suit floor type.</p> <p>Provide training on new method and then supervise.</p>
<p>Are people slipping on the floor even though it has been cleaned and is dry?</p>		<p>Thoroughly clean to remove build-up of polish, grease etc.</p> <p>Review and alter floor cleaning method.</p> <p>Provide training on new method and then supervise.</p>

<p>Can cleaning equipment cable be seen crossing or blocking walkways, creating a trip hazard?</p>		<p>Coil up unused equipment cable.</p> <p>Change power source – provide additional power sockets; use socket nearest area being cleaned.</p> <p>Consider change to battery-powered equipment.</p> <p>Provide training on new method and then supervise.</p>
<p>Do bin bags/cleaning equipment in walkways create trip hazards?</p>		<p>Provide training on awareness of trip hazards and how to avoid them and then supervise.</p>
<p><b>8. Tasks</b></p>		
<p>Do tasks stop people seeing slip or trip hazards, e.g. carrying items that restrict view, upset people's balance, rushing?</p>		<p>Review and improve manual handling and moving procedures.</p> <p>Review work activity.</p>

**Note:** This checklist is not exhaustive and should be adapted according to specific sectors and activities.





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