

Health and Safety Bulletin

Slips and trips

Articles in this newsletter:

- Slips and trips
- Emma – the work colleague of the future
- Case law update
- Link between gout and NIHL

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When the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) launched their five-year strategy in 2016, there were six priority themes. To support these themes HSE launched a website #Workright (<https://campaigns.hse.gov.uk/about/>) with the aim of helping Great Britain achieve “proportionate and effective risk management.” This in turn had two main areas of focus – “Go Home Healthy” (looking at the significant causes of work-related ill health such as lung disease, musculoskeletal disorders and stress) and “Go Home Safe” (focusing on work at height and slips and trips).

The need to continue focusing on work at height is obvious – it has long been the greatest cause of work-related fatal injuries. But why slips and trips – surely the controls for these risks are well known and easy to implement?

Statistics associated with slips and trips

Unfortunately, statistics reveal that slips and trips were responsible for 31% of non-fatal work-related injuries in 2017/18 – approximately 22,000 people were injured. The common causes of slips and trips (identified by the HSE) are tabulated below.

Causes of slips	Causes of trips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contamination – spills, leaks, overflows • flooring – unsuitable for the type of work activity • footwear – choosing footwear with the right “slip resistance” • environment – poor lighting, inclement weather conditions or high humidity • people – their behaviour, such as taking ownership for keeping an area clean and tidy, or rushing/allowing themselves to be distracted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • walkway location – failure to put them in the right place • housekeeping – not keeping walkways clear • design and maintenance – initial design of walkways not taking the environment into account or failing to maintain them to a suitable standard

HSE Resources

As with all hazards, the HSE expect employers to identify the causes of slips and trips relevant to them and implement effective control measures.

They have provided some useful resources to support employers such as the “shattered lives” campaign posters – highlighting the serious consequences of these type of accidents (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/shatteredlives/index.htm>) and the STEP tool (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/slips/step/index.htm#intro>), which provides various e-learning training packages highlighting the risks associated with slips and trips and how individuals can take action to reduce risk.



Example picture from shattered lives campaign

Conclusion

Although the HSE’s main focus is now work-related health, they are still taking account of RIDDOR reportable accident trends when choosing their other priorities.

With slips and trips causing such a high number of accidents, with, in some cases, life changing consequences, HSE investigation of these types of accident is likely to take precedence.

Recently issued health and safety information:

- HSE's task specific COSHH guidance for welding, cutting and allied jobs
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/welding/guidance/index.htm>
- HSE guidance on mental health
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/mental-health.htm>
- Supporting mental health at work
<https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/mental-health-support-report>
- Driving for better business website
<https://www.drivingforbetterbusiness.com/>

Emma – the work colleague of the future

Fellowes has completed some research into how office work is affecting our health and wellbeing and have developed a model called “Emma” to demonstrate how they think it is likely to affect us physically. They estimate that we now spend eight years of our life sitting down – this has resulted in “Emma” having a permanently bent back, varicose veins and weak leg muscles. She has redder eyes and more nose hair because of the quality of the air she is exposed to. They also suggest she has eczema because of stress and sallow skin because of the poor-quality light.

If you want to know more (if you're not depressed enough already!), you can read the full report at https://assets.fellowes.com/skins/fellowes/responsive/gb/en/resources/work-colleague-of-the-future/download/WCOF_Report_EU.pdf and watch a YouTube of “Emma” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fL5SuzGkUPw>.

Case Law update

This issue focuses on cases which have resulted from slip and trip accidents

The Co-op were fined **£400,000**, following the death of a 74 year-old member of the public. The shopper had been visiting the supermarket's Truro branch, where a faulty chiller had been leaking for 44 hours. He slipped on the leak and fell, hitting his head - which led to his death

A Leeds-based food company was fined **£8,500** after a contract electrician slipped on an icy floor caused by a fault on a freezer. He instinctively put out his right hand to steady himself, but as he did so, it struck the drive chain of a moving conveyor, taking the tips off two of his fingers down to the first joint, and injuring a third.

An investigation by the HSE found the safety guard had been removed from the machine, which meant that workers were not protected from dangerous moving parts. The contractor was off work for four weeks but then returned

Water leaking onto the floor in a Tesco store created a risk to both staff and customers. When an employee slipped and was injured, she was off work for several months. Tesco were prosecuted under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and for failing to report an injury following an accident within 15 days under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013 and fined

£200,000 with **£51,000** costs.

A waitress who slipped on water on the floor near a restaurant's dishwasher, landed, heavily on her right side and fractured her pelvis in two places. Investigations by her solicitors concluded the area around the dishwasher was often slippery, but on the night of the accident, no wet floor warning signs had been put up and no attempt had been made to dry the area. Although her employer's originally denied liability the case was eventually settled out of court with the waitress receiving **£6,000** in compensation

Link between gout and NIHL

Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) is commonly associated with exposure to high levels of industrial noise.

Certain antibiotics can also have an adverse effect – these are known as ototoxic drugs and include gentamicin, streptomycin and platinum-based chemotherapy treatments.

A recent study of 1.7million Medicare users in the US has now indicated that people over 65 have a 44% increased risk of hearing loss when suffering from gout. Since gout is a relatively common condition affecting around 2.5% of the UK population, it may soon be a common question on pre-employment health questionnaires for employers where noise exposure is a risk.

About Clwyd Associates...

We are a management consultancy, focusing on health and safety, and SAP based in the Midlands.

In business since 2000, we employ consultants with at least 15 years practical experience backed up by recognized professional and academic qualifications - ensuring our clients receive first class service.

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