

SEGMENT SIXTEEN – Slips and Trips

After studying this segment you should have a greater understanding of the slips and trips risks and hazards that are common in the Seafood Industry as many of our work areas involve water, fish and people.

AIMS OF THE SEGMENT

The aim of this segment is to help you to appreciate the risks that can lead to slips and trips and be able to:

- Give examples of common situations that may lead to slips or trips.
- Describe the factors that contribute to persons slipping or tripping.
- Describe the methods and controls to reduce the risk of slips or trips.

What do we mean by slips and trips?

Or, when is a fall a trip? The usual difference between a slip/trip and a fall, is that a slip or trip takes place on the same level. A person may fall to the ground when tripping or slipping, but a fall is a *fall from height*. At least as far as the statistics are concerned.

In the UK during 2022/23 there were 61,000 injuries reported by employers. **561,000 non-fatal** injuries were self-reported. These injuries resulted in time off work, sometimes more than 7 days off work.

Collectively that is more than 620,000 injuries of which 32% were caused by a slip or a trip.

That is *almost 200,000 injuries caused by a simple slip or a simple trip*. In 2024 my own son slipped on a wet pavement, broke a hip and suffered 7 weeks off work thanks to a combination of glass tiles inset into a pavement and a wet rainy lunchtime walk.

CAUSES AND PREVENTION

We will deal with slips and trips separately.

What can cause a slip?

Contamination: Dry, clean floors rarely cause anyone to slip. Wet floors or floors contaminated with seafood waste, spilled batter mix, anything leaking from a pipe or even a small amount of ice can be a real slip problem.

- The contamination can be introduced by normal work activities, sloppy maintenance or poor cleaning.

- If the contamination is accidental then clean it up. If the contamination (water for example) is an unavoidable part of the work activity then take other measures such as having the right type of flooring, the right type of footwear, or regular cleaning to minimise the impact.

Years ago I had cause to go behind the counter of a fast food chain, while there as a customer. I found the floor very slippery in my office shoes, but the staff had no problems as they all wore the right kind of (company-supplied) footwear.

Flooring: [The Workplace \(Health, Safety and Welfare\) Regs 1992 \(Regulation 12\)](#) require floors to be suitable, in good condition and free from obstructions. People should be able to move around safely.

- Where a floor is likely to be subject to frequent contamination, people should still be able to walk on it without the risk of slipping. This applies to all seafood industry workplaces, from fishmarkets to fish and chip shops.
- In the “fast food” example above, the hazard had been controlled for staff by the use of specialist footwear. **However** as a visitor I was at risk as I hadn’t been issued the footwear. The better (but much more expensive) solution would have been to replace the flooring with something that was safe for everyone.

Footwear: Footwear selection has to take account of a number of factors in addition to slip resistance, such as comfort, durability, water resistance and any other safety features required, such as toe protection. The final choice may have to be a compromise. See here for [more information](#) if needed.

- If you have supplied footwear for work, has it any of these three codes stamped on it?
 - SRA – tested on ceramic tile wetted with dilute soap solution
 - SRB – tested on smooth steel with glycerol
 - SRC – tested under both the above conditions

Environment: What do we mean by environment when it comes to preventing slips (and trips)?

- Too much light on a shiny floor can cause glare and stop people from seeing hazards on the floor and stairs.
- Too little light will also prevent people from seeing hazards on the floor and stairs.
- Unfamiliar and loud noises may be distracting.
- If water gets onto a smooth surface inside or outside of a building, it may create a slip hazard.
- Cold weather can cause frost and ice to form, which may create slippery surfaces.

- Condensation may make a smooth floor slippery.

People: Last but not at all least is People. How people behave at work can have a big impact. Do they:

- Deal with spillages themselves instead of waiting for someone else to deal with it? Or promptly report it if that's the company procedure.
- Wear their company footwear (PPE) as it can make a difference?
- Rush around, carrying large objects which prevent them from seeing where they are going or becoming distracted whilst walking?

Summary

Slip factors include: contamination, cleaning, flooring, people, environment and footwear.

What can cause trips?

Trips are in some ways easier to understand. There are three main factors that contribute to a trip:

Walkways: Are they in the right place, are they being used, are they available for use, are they blocked or just not "convenient"?

What tasks are taking place on the walkway, is the task preventing the employee from seeing where he is going for example.

Is the walkway clearly marked out and known to all? Don't forget your occasional visitor.

Housekeeping: It is not just good enough to have a walkway, it must be kept clear, no trailing wires, no obstructions. Employees and cleaners need to have 'a see it, sort it' attitude to ensure these and other work areas are kept clear. Is the cleaning regime effective? Are there enough bins, storage facilities etc?

Design and maintenance: Is the floor suitable for the environment, installed correctly and properly maintained. Are the walkways wide enough & level. Are stairs suitable, are risers consistent, are usable handrails available.

Environmental factors also fall into this category, is the lighting good enough for employees to see hazards, what about distractions that might prevent them from seeing where they are going.

DO TRY THIS AT WORK

Next time you have some time available at work, perhaps during a break, or even while moving about the workplace, try this.

Make a list (mental or written) of any possible slip or trip hazards that could occur in your workplace.

Make another list of the reasons why they are not a significant risk, perhaps because controls are in place.

For example:

- Floors are smooth and frequently wet. They can be slippery, BUT
 - We have non slip footwear.
 - Spillages are quickly cleaned up.
 - Flooring is textured to provide more grip.

This activity will help you to appreciate how your employer is working to keep you safer.

If you spot anything that isn't adequately controlled then please do report it.

For more information view this HSE guide on [slips and trips](#)

