



Avoiding Slips and Trips

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The Details

The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) requires that employers ensure that their employees are safe during work activities. This includes employers assessing recognised risks and actively controlling them, along with a duty to inform employees of hazardous situations.

Floor cleaning is an essential part of ensuring that businesses comply with health and safety legislation. If floor maintenance is not carried out and an individual is injured because of this, then the business may end up liable for civil action to be taken against them.

The Principles / Rules

Prevention through effective management systems is key, cleaners should be advised on how the job should best be done. As a result research indicates that dangerous situations are due to poorly thought out cleaning processes. Building a good relationship with management, a healthy system can be created which: -

- Monitors and reviews work to identify improvements which can be made to cleaning regimes
- Employs quality assurance procedures to assure work is being carried out properly
- Correct planning regimes are used to take into account when to clean the floor based on type of floor, length of time to clean and the type of people who use the floor
- Communication through all levels to ensure planning is realistic, achievable and effective

Examples

Methods for Preventing Floor Contamination

By preventing contamination in the first place less time needs to be spent on the process of cleaning itself. At entrances to buildings, matting to wipe your feet and umbrella holders are simple methods of preventing wet from the outside being brought in.

Effective Cleaning Methods

Detergent

Water on its own is not enough to remove greasy and oily marks. A concentration of detergent is vital for removal.

Mopping

This is a cleaning method only really effective on smooth floors since the mop will only skim a surface despite the effort used. Mopping will leave a wet film of water on a surface even if the surface is dried with a paper mop. Allow a floor to dry completely before allowing others to walk over the area.

Sweeping Brush

For removal of dry contaminants.

Squeegee

A squeegee can be very effective in removing excess water. If a surface is rough enough to maintain grip then a squeegee is not necessary. It is very important that an oily or greasy substance is recognised since a squeegee will often have the effect of spreading the contamination.

Other Information

Floor cleaning is a relatively cost effective method when compared to the financial risk of injury. In healthy individuals slips and trips are often due to

- Damaged or badly laid flooring
- Wet or dirty flooring (E.g. water or oil)
- Floor has an inherently smooth surface

Legal action can be very expensive and insurance would only cover a small part of any compensation claim. A way to avoid risk of individuals tripping / slipping and injuring themselves is to ensure risk is designed out of the building, for example reducing the need for ledges or steps.

Regulations / Legislation Applicable

The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)

Disclaimer


The above is intended as a quick and brief insight into the requirements for the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the contents are for guide only, for full comprehensive details on the regulations please visit www.hse.gov.uk

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