

Slips and Trips (winter conditions)

During winter conditions, slips and trips accidents and incidents increase significantly. There are a number of reasons behind this, including;

- Less daylight
- Wet and slippery leaves
- Increased rain water
- Ice and snow conditions

There are some basic steps that most companies can consider to help reduce the likelihood of your staff, customers or visitors slipping or tripping. The main consideration must be to keep regularly used walkways and parking areas well lit and clear of wet leaves, standing water and snow and ice.

Lighting

Consider if you have provided enough lighting around the workplace to enable you staff, customers or visitors to see potential hazards on the ground. Consult with your staff on a regular basis on health and safety matters, as they may have noticed hazards that may otherwise go uncorrected. Include entry and exit routes during routine inspections of the workplace, taking into account the opening and closing times of your business when it may be dark, wet and slippery. Remember to consider emergency escape routes in your inspections also. You may find you need to improve the levels of lighting provided in certain areas. This may be by providing additional lights or may be as simple as using different types of bulbs in existing lights.

Wet and Slippery Leaves

Wet leaves can create a significant slipping hazard if not cleared on a regular basis, particularly when wet and decaying. It is also possible that leaves may mask other hazards on exterior walkways. By removing leaves on a regular basis you can reduce the likelihood of slipping incidents. You may also want to consider removing bushes or trees that the leaves fall from to reduce the build-up in the first place.

Increased Rain Water

During the winter months, we can expect increased periods of rain which may leave walkways wet and leave standing water, which will increase possible slipping hazards. When considering control measures to reduce or illuminate water related slipping hazards, consider;

- Ensure external paved areas are constructed of slip resistant materials.
- Discourage people using short cuts over grassy areas which may become slippery. If you have areas where people consistently use a particular route over grass, consider converting this to a proper pathway.
- When designing new work areas or premises, consider how personnel may manoeuvre around the workplace when complete and ensure paths are provided in the right areas.
- A considerable amount of slipping incidents happen inside the workplace close to entrances where water has been brought into the area on shoes from outside, possibly onto tiled floor areas in receptions which become slippery when wet. Fitting large canopies over the

building entrance can help reduce this issue, along with providing mats for personnel to wipe their feet. You can also provide large absorbent mats inside entrance ways or consider changing the floor surface inside the building altogether e.g. fitting carpets rather than tiles.

Ice, Frost and Snow

To reduce the risk of slipping and falling on ice, frost or snow in the winter months, you will need to consider what is reasonable for you to do that will enable you to control these risk to acceptable levels. You will need to identify the routes most likely to be used by staff, customers and visitors that may be affected by a build-up of ice, frost and snow. You will need to consider;

- Building entrance and exits (consider staff only routes)
- Car parks
- Paths and walkways
- Areas used as regular short cuts
- Slopped areas
- Areas which are in shade for long periods

When freezing temperatures are being forecast, you need to have a plan of action to address these issues, which may include;

- Using salt or grit on areas that may become slippery
- Take some walkways out of use and direct pedestrians to areas less slippery which have been cleared.
- Where entrances are provided for staff only, make sure these are included in any control measures. It may be acceptable to allow staff to use customer entrance and exit routes in wet and ice conditions, rather than having to clear extra areas.

Gritting of Areas

Providing grit is relatively cheap and an accepted method of de-icing walkways and car parking areas. Rock salt is the most common form of grit used for the purpose of de-icing in winter months. By gritting car parks and pedestrian walkways, you can considerably reduce the number of slipping and tripping incidents during these winter months.

For best results, gritting should be carried out and ice, frost or snow has been forecast. The best time to undertake gritting is in the evening before the frost settles and then again in the morning prior to the main bulk of employees arriving at work. Remember rock salt does not work instantly. It requires time to melt the ice or snow.

Heavy rain will wash away any salt previously put down. If that rain then turns to snow, this will produce the same issues as if no precautions had been taken. It is difficult to treat compacted snow and ice with grit, so preventing the snow becoming compacted in the first place is the best precaution.

Risk Safety Consultants Ltd