

Slips, trips and falls



Gosha chairman **Andrew Mills** explains why it is so easy to be injured with slips, trips and falls in the workplace, but so easy to prevent



DO YOU know the most frequent cause of serious workplace injuries in Guernsey? Well, the title of this article gives you the answer.

Slips, trips and falls occur regularly and easily. We all do them from time to time, usually when we are not concentrating on our environment, maybe thinking of something else than preventing an accident from occurring.

Slips, trips and falls are the most common causes of serious workplace accidents in Guernsey, resulting in injuries that can range from minor to severe.

These incidents not only affect employees but also impact businesses through lost productivity, increased costs, diverted management time, fines, lost business, potential legal liabilities and so on.

Effective measures to prevent slips, trips and falls are essential for the continued wellbeing of any business, charity or other organisation in Guernsey.

To effectively prevent slips, trips and falls, it's helpful to identify some of their common causes:

- Slippery surfaces: wet floors, spills or polished surfaces, inadequate floor coverings (wrong type, poorly fitted, inadequately secured and/or wrong size).
- Uneven or damaged flooring: cracks, potholes, cobbles or other uneven surfaces.
- Obstacles and clutter: things left on the floor or in walkways often create tripping hazards. Loose and trailing cables are

a favourite cause. And poorly sited furniture (chairs, desks, cupboards, etc) and machines and other equipment can cause problems.

- Poor lighting.
- Lack of warning signs.
- Inadequate footwear: wearing inappropriate footwear can increase the risk of slips, trips and falls. Flip-flops, worn trainers, shoes with high heels or inadequate soles – all obvious to avoid accidents, but you'd be surprised how often these factors are involved.

Often, the prevention of slips, trips and falls can be cheap to implement, on many occasions implementation will not involve a cost at all.

Have a think about how they can be prevented in your workplace.

Prevention just needs a little thought, a bit of care.

Risk assessments (regular walks around workplaces/assessment of activities to identify hazards and then do something to prevent or mitigate the identified hazard) are one of the best ways to help make Guernsey workplaces safer. Here are some other things you can do:

MAINTAIN CLEAN AND DRY FLOORS

- Regularly clean and dry walk surfaces, especially in areas prone to spills or wet condition.
- Use appropriate cleaning products and ensure floors are properly clean and dried after cleaning.

USE WARNING SIGNS

- Place warning signs in areas where floors are wet or where there are other hazards.
- Use clear and visible signs to alert employees and visitors to potential dangers.

ENSURE PROPER LIGHTING

- Provide adequate lighting in all areas, especially stairways and corridors.
- Regularly check and replace bulbs which don't work and faulty lighting fixtures.

REMOVE OBSTACLES AND CLUTTER

- Keep entrances and exits (especially fire exits), other walkways and work areas clear of obstacles and clutter.
- Implement storage solutions to keep items off the floor and organised.

USE NON-SLIP MATS, FLOORING AND WARNING SIGNS

- Place non-slip mats in areas prone to wetness or which are otherwise slippery, such as entrances and exits and washrooms.

PROVIDE SENSIBLE FOOTWEAR

- Encourage employees to wear appropriate footwear for their work environment.
- Provide guidelines on suitable footwear for different tasks and conditions e.g. sturdy shoes with steel/hard toe-caps

ENSURE PROTECTION FROM FALLS

- Provide hard hats and hi-vis vests and fix ladders (or use lifting equipment as an alternative), fit fall-prevention rails and other safety devices, such as fall-arrest harnesses.
- Make sure they are used and used properly.

CONDUCT REGULAR RISK ASSESSMENTS

- Regularly inspect the workplace and your activities for potential hazards.
- Address any issues promptly and implement mitigating measures.
- Make a written note of your assessment, its date, problems identified and action taken – it can help you if something subsequently goes wrong.

Implementing measures to prevent slips,

trips, and falls will bring benefits to businesses, including:

- reduced injuries and prevention of workplace deaths
- increased productivity: a safer work environment can lead to increased productivity, better efficiency and a happier work environment
- avoiding the costs associated with incidents can result in reduced costs associated with workplace injuries (e.g. fines, costs of replacing injured staff, lost business and avoiding higher insurance costs)
- reputation: organisations that prioritise safety are seen as good organisations by employees, customers and others.

Training and giving guidance to employees on the importance of safety and how to prevent slips, trips and falls is important, even in Guernsey's offices.

Offer personal protective equipment, where appropriate, to protect staff and ensure it is used. Provide refresher training at appropriate intervals and make a note of and do something about near misses.

Regular reminders and training sessions can help reinforce safe practices and ensure that employees are aware of potential hazards in a workplace.

Additionally, promoting a culture of safety and wellbeing within an organisation can encourage employees and others to take an active and proactive role in maintaining a safe working environment.

Slips, trips and falls are readily preventable incidents and, when they occur, can have significant consequences. Guernsey has on average four serious workplace incidents each week and around two on average are from slips, trips and falls.

By being aware of the causes and implementing sensible practices, organisations can create a safer working environment and can reduce the risk of incidents occurring.

Prioritising safety not only protects employees, visitors, customers and neighbours, it also contributes to the overall success and reputation of an organisation.

It would be great to see the number of reported serious incidents fall in Guernsey – can you help?