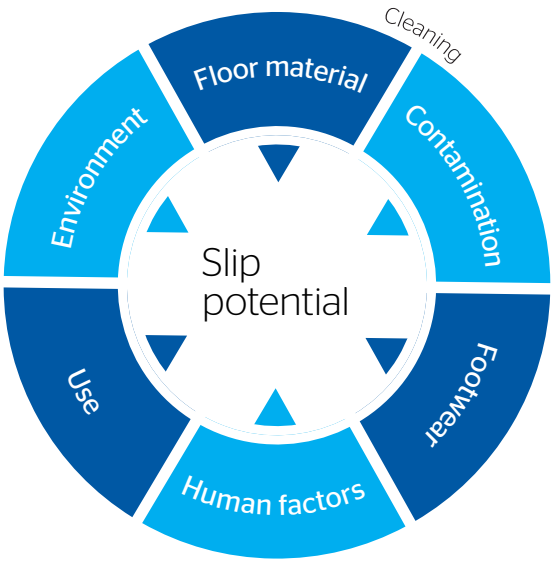
Slips and trips
Slip potential model

Introduction

The Slip Potential Model identifies common issues that contribute to slip accidents. It helps in identifying possible controls to stop future accidents in the workplace. Some of these points are expanded on in other guides.



The slip potential model

Flooring (See Risk Essentials - Slip resistant flooring)

Having the appropriate floor installed is the most effective control measure for preventing slips for anyone walking on it. Clean, dry floors are not slippery.

If floors become contaminated during normal use, it needs to be understood what the risk of a slip is in those conditions. Not all floors are slippery when contaminated.

Water is the most common contaminant in most slips, but oils, dusts and powders can all make floors more slippery. Flooring that is shiny is usually slippery when wet and doesn't require much water to make it slippery.

The best way to measure slip resistance is the Pendulum test. It is designed to assess pedestrian slip risk in both dry and contaminated conditions and crucially it can be used both in the laboratory and on site, making it ideal for assessing or monitoring installed flooring. The test can be done with two different rubber materials, one that simulates pedestrians in shoes and another that simulates barefoot pedestrians. Consider who will be using your floor if you are thinking about getting it tested.

Many other tests exist for the slip resistance of flooring but few of them give useful information. Some of those that do are limited to laboratory testing making them inappropriate for assessing the floors installed in the workplace.

Contamination (See Risk Essentials – Contamination)

As mentioned above, most floors are not slippery when clean and dry, however floors will often become slippery when contaminated. Consider how floors could become contaminated:

- Does the entrance mat dry people's shoes effectively? (See Risk Essentials – Entrances)
- Do customers spill their drinks?
- Do kitchen staff carry dripping baskets away from the fryers?
- Does the roof leak?

Take a few minutes to observe what happens. Prepare a plan for dealing with the source of the contamination, be realistic, and if prevention isn't feasible, assess the suitability of the flooring. Remember that only a very small amount of contamination is needed to make smooth floors slippery.

Cleaning (See Risk Essentials – Cleaning regimes)

If the floor is slippery when wet, then using a wet cleaning process e.g. wet mopping will increase the slip risk until the floor is completely dry again. Do not spread spills on smooth floors, use a paper towel or wet vac to absorb the spill. Keep people off the floor as it dries or dry it thoroughly before people are allowed to walk on it.

Even if the floor isn't slippery when wet, the cleaning process is important as a build-up of dirt can compromise the slip resistance of safety flooring over time. Don't assume that wet mopping is the most effective way of cleaning your floors, other techniques, such as using a correctly operated scrubber-dryer, may be more suitable.

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