

Slips and trips

Incident investigation

Introduction

When someone falls it is important to learn lessons so that things can be done to prevent similar events happening in the future. This guide gives advice on how to investigate a fall incident so that the root cause and solutions can be identified.

Investigating a fall

A thorough incident investigation should be conducted as soon after the event as possible. It is important to ensure that others will not be exposed to any potential hazards, but make the area safe before starting the investigation. Any actions taken to make the area safe should be recorded as part of the investigation.

Involve local managers and relevant staff in the investigation process and aim to record all pertinent details as fully and accurately as possible. The investigation should be conducted in a systematic way and it is often helpful to use a record sheet that includes prompts and specific questions. An example record sheet is provided at the end of this guide, which can be used to aid your investigation.

It is recommended that photographs of the scene are taken and relevant evidence, such as condition of the footwear, are collected and/or recorded to provide a more detailed record of the event. When taking photos consider the circumstances of the incident; for example, when investigating a fall down a stair, ensure that some of the photos show the view looking down the stair, the direction the person was likely to have been walking.

If possible, speak to the person involved in the incident and any witnesses to get their account of events. Ask them to be detailed in their account and question any aspects that are not explicit. Aim to establish what happened, what hazards were present and why the hazards were there. It is useful to consider both opinion and fact, but it is important to clarify and record which is which.

What happened?

It is important for all those involved in the investigation to recognize the difference between a slip, a trip and a fall and to understand exactly what took place.

Slips, trips and falls can be defined as follows:

- > **Slip** - A lack of grip causes uncontrolled sliding of the foot.
- > **Trip** - The pedestrian catches their foot on an obstacle causing a loss of balance.
- > **Fall** - An unrecovered loss of balance, this can occur because of a slip or trip but also for other reasons such as miss-placing your feet on stairs or suffering a dizzy spell.

Falls happen very quickly, and people cannot always recall the initiating factor well. Be aware that people often use the terms slip, trip and fall interchangeably as a description of losing their balance. If a person slips, they tend to fall backwards, if they trip, they tend to fall forwards.

It is important to establish what the person was doing at the time of the event and where exactly it took place. Was the activity well planned and was the environment suitable.

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What hazard(s) may have caused it?

Identify hazards that may have led to the event, such as contaminated floor surfaces, obstacles, exposed drops, uneven surfaces, poor visibility.

Why was the hazard there?

It is important to understand what factors lead up to the event so that the root cause (the failure from which all other failings grow) can be identified. For example, if the floor was contaminated, why was it contaminated? How did the contamination get there? Is the floor regularly contaminated? Could things be done differently to keep the floor clean and dry?

Were there any other contributing factors?

Was the person rushing or distracted at the time of the incident? Did their behaviour or work task expose them to greater risk, for example pushing/pulling a heavy load, using a mobile phone while walking or carrying items in both hands? All these factors make an incident more likely but don't assume that human error was the sole cause as this prevents identifying other solutions that could prevent a similar incident from happening in the future.

Review

Establish what has been done historically (if anything) to prevent this type of event and investigate why these measures did not work. Were procedures followed?

Have other similar incidents occurred? Were all the causal factors identified in a risk assessment and were the control measures appropriate and sufficient?

Assess the risk

Consider all the factors identified in the investigation and assess how likely they are to reoccur. Consider what took place and assess whether there are any additional control measures that would be reasonably practicable to implement to reduce the risk of similar events happening in the future. Review existing risk assessments and update as necessary.

Monitor

Regularly review accident and incident reports to identify trends and highlight areas of concern. Consider using a database to capture event information as this may help to identify problematic processes, activities, equipment, locations, etc. Monitoring will also help to establish if any newly implemented controls are effective.

Get advice

If an investigation fails to identify what went wrong or to identify suitable control measures to prevent similar events occurring again, it is often helpful to gain the views of others. Always consult the workforce and encourage them to voice their concerns and propose solutions. Ask other organizations within your sector what they do and try to adopt industry best practice. Discuss any unresolved issues with a fall prevention specialist and, if necessary, try to develop bespoke solutions.

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Slips and trips

Accident Investigation form

Your risk assessments and development of safe working practices should be informed in part by the history of slip and trip incidents in your workplace. Use the form below to keep a record of slip and trip incidents and where they occur. You can then develop your risk assessments and safe working procedures relevant to your workplace.

It is also important to gather the views of employees on areas they consider to have the most hazards. Don't forget to review sickness records and check for incidents that have not been reported.

1 General details

Name of injured person

.....

Date of birth

Male

Female

Non-binary

Address

Customer or member of the public

Employee

Contractor

Employer

Department/role

.....

Nature of injury, near miss or damage (please list details below)

First aid given

Yes

No

Hospital attended

Yes

No

Slips and trips - Accident Investigation form

2 Witnesses

Please list below the names, addresses, and contact telephone numbers of witnesses.

Name Telephone

Address	Statement taken	Yes	No
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Name Telephone

Address	Statement taken	Yes	No
1. The company has a clear vision and mission statement.			
2. The company has a strong leadership team.			
3. The company has a clear understanding of its target market.			
4. The company has a strong financial position.			
5. The company has a clear strategy for growth.			
6. The company has a strong customer base.			
7. The company has a clear understanding of its competitors.			
8. The company has a strong brand identity.			
9. The company has a clear understanding of its industry trends.			
10. The company has a strong management team.			

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8. The company has a strong brand identity.			
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10. The company has a strong financial performance.			

Name Telephone

Address	Statement taken	Yes	No
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2. The company has a strong leadership team.			
3. The company has a clear understanding of its target market.			
4. The company has a strong financial position.			
5. The company has a strong reputation in the market.			
6. The company has a strong customer base.			
7. The company has a strong product line.			
8. The company has a strong marketing strategy.			
9. The company has a strong sales team.			
10. The company has a strong distribution network.			

Name Telephone

Address	Statement taken	Yes	No
---------------	-----------------	-----	----

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3 Accident details

Date and time of accident

Location of accident

Task/activity involved in accident (Please list details below)

What was the condition and type of floor area where accident occurred?

.....

What type of footwear was the injured party wearing? What was the condition of the footwear?

.....

Was the floor being cleaned at the time of the accident?	Yes	No
--	-----	----

Was the floor surface left in a wet condition?	Yes	No
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Was the area of floor surface segregated from pedestrian walking routes?	Yes	No
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Were warning signs in use?	Yes	No
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Is there evidence of the workplace floor surface being inspected on a regular basis by a member of the management team?	Yes	No
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Does housekeeping appear to be of a good standard?	Yes	No
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Is there evidence of the cleaning staff being provided with adequate training on floor cleaning techniques, etc.?	Yes	No
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Were there any mats in the area?	Yes	No
If yes, what was their size and the condition of their edges?		

.....

Was there an adequate level of lighting in the area?	Yes	No
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Were there any obstacles in walkways?	Yes	No
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If relevant, were trailing cables routed appropriately or adequately covered?	Yes	No
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If relevant, describe the equipment being used for floor cleaning and its condition

.....

Were weather conditions involved in the accident? For example, did water ingress or salting/sanding procedures play a part?	Yes	No
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Has the injured person previously had a fall on the premises?	Yes	No
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Did you take photographs of the accident scene and any hazard or substance on the floor? (Use a tape measure to evidence scale). Attach photographs to this report or save electronic copies to a secure location.	Yes	No
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Check for CCTV footage of the incident? (Review and save a copy to a secure location).	Yes	No
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4 Investigator's conclusions

Corrective action needed (including responsible person). If no action is required state 'none'.

Description of action required

Date to be completed

By whom

.....

5 Review

Review of corrective actions required?

Yes

No

Name of person carrying out review

Signature

Date

.....

.....

Name of person carrying out review

Signature

Date

.....

.....

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