

3.0 Managing the risk for slips and trips



MIND YOUR STEP

For many, the arrangements for preventing slips and trips at any premises will form part of a more comprehensive, systematic approach to managing health and safety generally.

Introduction

Establishing this approach is a requirement of employers under the Management of Health and Safety at Work etc. Regulations¹. Here, they must make appropriate arrangements to ensure the effective planning, organising, controlling, monitoring and review of any precautions that are put in place. The complexity of these arrangements will depend on the size of the premises and the nature of the activities there. These arrangements must be recorded where there are five or more employees, usually forming part of an organisation's health and safety policy.

To assist business leaders, owners, directors, trustees and others in this, the HSE has set out broad guidelines in their publication HSG 65 'Managing for health and safety'². Whilst providing a framework, the extent to which it is applied will depend on the organisation concerned. As such, it may be more relevant to those responsible for much larger historic properties or estates. Here, the guidelines can be adopted to develop arrangements for the management of risk from slips and trips. For much smaller premises or those just getting started, other basic information provided by the HSE might be more relevant³.

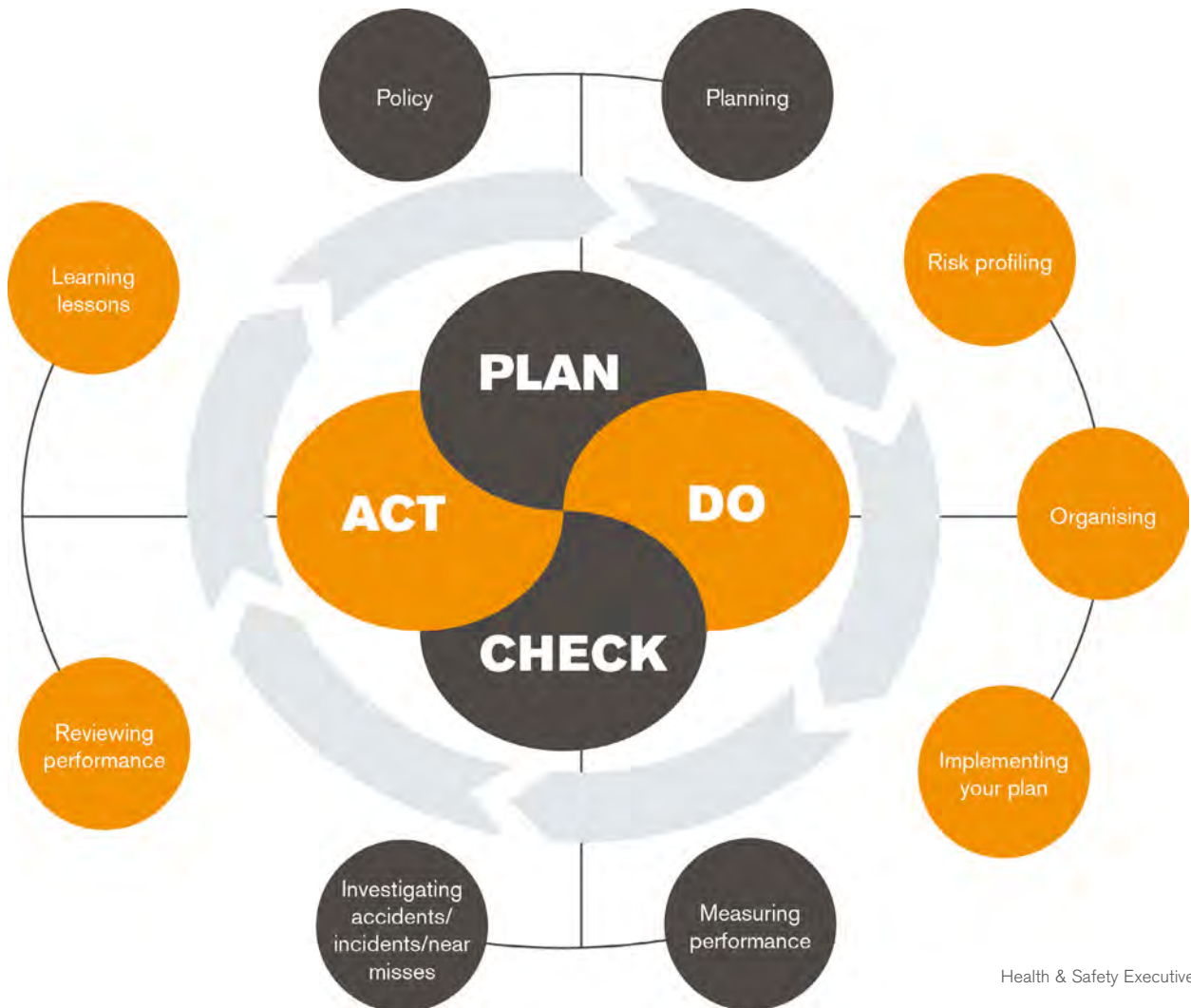
¹ Regulation 5, SI 1999, No. 3242, see www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1999/3242/regulation/5/made

² See www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg65.htm

³ Health and safety made simple: The basics for your business, see www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety

Plan, Do, Check, Act

HSG 65 sets out a 'Plan, Do, Check, Act' approach. It urges employers to treat health and safety as an integral part of good management generally rather than something that is standalone. Success in implementing the approach will be set against a backdrop of good leadership and management; trained and skilled employees; and a culture of involvement.



The key guidelines are:

- Plan** This is about setting policy and planning to implement it.
- Do** This is about risk assessment, identifying suitable precautions and deciding on priorities; involving employees and others where necessary, as well as providing adequate resources; and implementing precautions.
- Check** This is about measuring performance, e.g. making sure that precautions have been implemented, checking their effectiveness and investigating any accidents or incidents that occur.

- Act** This is about reviewing health and safety performance, e.g. learning from accidents and experience; revisiting plans, policies and risk assessments and taking action if necessary.

As mentioned, for many smaller premises an approach like this may not be appropriate. In these cases, whatever approach is adopted, it will probably contain some of these elements.

Plan, Do, Check, Act – preventing slips and trips

In adopting this framework to manage the risk from slips and trips, it will be appropriate to consider the following:

Plan

If you need to prepare a written health and safety policy statement, then the arrangements in it will need to address the prevention of slips and trips. The level of detail will reflect the nature of the premises concerned. Usually, policy documentation includes:

- a statement of intent
- details of any organisational arrangements for managing health and safety, including specific responsibilities of those required to implement them
- (or refers to) specific arrangements for managing particular hazards, reflecting the findings of any risk assessments that have been completed.

For slips and trips, the policy (or supporting documentation) could include detail relating to:

- Any standards to be achieved e.g. in relation to floor maintenance; handrails; dealing with spills; cleaning; gritting, clearing or temporarily closing off access routes if there is snowfall or ice; the prevention of walk-in contaminant at building entrances, perhaps using absorbent matting; providing adequate lighting; housekeeping; defect reporting etc.
- Those (e.g. premises, facilities or estate managers; supervisors, employees, volunteers) with specific responsibilities for preventing slips and trips, including the nature of those responsibilities. These could include making sure that work is planned to achieve any standards identified; obtaining advice where this is not possible; reporting spills or defects; rectifying defects or dealing with them until this can be done; any inspections or checks that are needed etc.
- Any periodic checks or inspections that are needed to ensure that access routes remain safe e.g. this could include the areas and items to be checked or inspected; the periodicity of the checks or inspections required; any training or information that might be required for those completing them; the records to be completed and kept etc.

- Any information or training that might be necessary for employees, volunteers and others: e.g. relating to the precautions to be taken; any cleaning procedures they might be involved in; footwear to be worn; arrangements for reporting spills, defects or other concerns etc.
- Other, more general supplementary procedures that might be relevant: e.g. those relating to risk assessment; accident reporting etc.

In larger premises where plans are developed to manage health and safety generally, these will need to consider the prevention of slips and trips. Here, it may be necessary to identify:

- what the organisation is doing currently to prevent slips and trips, using accurate information perhaps from any risk assessments, inspections or audits
- if anything further needs to be done, using legal requirements and benchmarking to make comparisons
- what action is necessary to reach that point (including any resources that might be needed to achieve the standards required).

Do

- Risk assessments should consider the potential for slips and trips for all areas of the premises accessible by employees, volunteers, members of the public and others.
- When organising your activities to ensure that any necessary precautions are taken, you may need to involve employees in identifying what needs to be done; provide them with adequate information, instruction and training; make available competent advice on slip and trip prevention; manage contractors properly (particularly if they are involved in cleaning activities or their work introduces additional slip and trip hazards or accentuates existing ones).
- In implementing your plan, any precautions necessary to prevent slips and trips will need to be taken. Usually, this will include proper maintenance of floors, paths, walkways, other traffic routes, lighting etc. The nature and frequency of this will be determined by the type of premises involved and the risk posed by any slip and trip hazards identified. For example, external lighting can easily become damaged or dysfunctional over time and may need more frequent checks where footpaths are used regularly, particularly in autumn and winter months.

Check

Checking that you are managing the risk from slips and trips at your premises is vital. This is not only to prevent accidents from happening in the first place, but possibly help defend a claim should one arise in the future.

Checking that precautions to prevent slips and trips remain effective includes both:

- Active monitoring, using routine checks and inspections to identify problems before things go wrong.
- Reactive monitoring, involving accident investigation or incident analysis to help improve precautions in the future and collate evidence.

It is important that any monitoring not only identifies problems, but also helps understand what caused them. This is particularly relevant when it comes to slips and trips.

It is also important to prepare for any accidents that could result from slips and trips. This will allow staff to deal with them properly at the time; for reports to be made to the enforcing authority if they are needed and for any investigations to be completed.

Whatever approach is adopted, any monitoring needs to be conducted in a timely manner. For it to have any impact, the output from any monitoring that takes place must be reported back to key decision-makers.

Act

This involves using the information gathered from the checks you have made to review health and safety performance generally. This helps to make sure that any policy, arrangements and precautions remain effective. Considering slips and trips as part of this makes sense, as it will help establish any future planning that is necessary.

In the context of slips and trips, it might be useful to review:

- whether the health and safety policy and its arrangements reflect any current priorities
- any plans to make sure that they address any shortcomings
- any priorities to check these will deal with the major shortcomings or events.

Need to contact us?

For further advice Ecclesiastical customers can call our Risk Management Advice Line on **0345 600 7531** (Monday to Friday 09:00 to 17:00, excluding Bank Holidays) or email us at risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com and one of our experts will call you back within 24 hours.

⁴ Under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/1471/contents/made

