


# 6.1 Preventing trips: Housekeeping



Poor housekeeping or badly-planned cleaning activities can increase the risk of people tripping by leaving clutter on the floor or trailing cables across walkways. It is very easy to ignore these simple issues, especially during busy periods, but they can present a significant risk of someone getting badly hurt.

## Introduction

Many trip hazards can be eliminated with good housekeeping. They are usually easy to spot but it is also easy to ignore them and assume that the next person to walk by will also spot the hazard, rather than fall over it. Achieving good standards of housekeeping requires everyone responsible to take ownership of the problem and tidy up any hazards they see wherever possible.

## Best practice

These include:

- **Provide adequate storage** for equipment, tools and materials away from pedestrian walkways and other access routes.
- **Provide adequate bins** for waste materials and cleaning procedures so that waste does not accumulate.
- **Plan cleaning activities** to avoid trailing cables across walkways or leaving waste materials underfoot.
- **Provide training and information** for employees and volunteers outlining the importance of good housekeeping standards. All staff and volunteers should be encouraged to take responsibility for this simple but crucial task.
- **Carry out periodic inspections** to check for any poorly placed items in walkways or other access routes, tidying up any issues that are found.



Storage rooms or cupboards can help keep clutter off floors and walkways.

## Challenges for historic properties

Many historic properties are very small and have limited storage space. This can make the storage space available very cluttered and result in items being left on the floor where people could trip over them.

In some properties, where a lot of work is undertaken by

volunteers, it may not be clear what storage is available or who is responsible for keeping areas tidy. Often, if it is not clear that a person is responsible for the housekeeping in an area, they will assume it is someone else's job and no one will tidy up potential trip hazards.

## Other possible solutions

These include:

- **Ensure that there is suitable dedicated storage available**, that staff and volunteers know what should be stored where and that storage is regularly cleared of clutter and unwanted items.
- **Consider trip hazards when planning cleaning activities** (see [module 5.2, Preventing slips: Cleaning](#)).
- **Avoid leaving waste or other materials in walkways** including wet floor signs.
- **Limit the impact of trailing cables** by advising those involved in cleaning tasks to always plug equipment such as vacuum cleaners into the nearest socket, or use battery powered equipment. This may not be possible in some historic properties due to the lack of available electrical sockets generally and additional precautions might be required.
- **Clearly communicate to all staff and volunteers that it is everyone's responsibility** to keep floors clear of clutter (regardless of who made the mess). Here, it may be necessary to emphasise that, although it is a very simple activity, a quick tidy up can stop a very unpleasant injury to colleagues or visitors.
- **Encourage a 'sort it or report it' culture.** Staff and volunteers should be encouraged to deal with hazards that can be easily tidied up. If this is not possible or it needs another member of staff to sort it out (see [module 6.2, Preventing trips: Maintenance](#)), then they should report it promptly so the problem can be fixed as quickly as possible.
- **Monitor periodically to check for potential trip hazards**, especially in high-risk areas such as walkways and on stairs. More frequent checks may be needed in areas where there is high footfall or events (such as, concerts, open days etc.) are planned that have the potential to introduce additional housekeeping or storage issues.



Remove warning signs once a floor is dry to reduce the risk of someone tripping over them.

## 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](mailto:risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com) and one of our experts will call you back within 24 hours.

