

6.2 Preventing trips: Maintenance



Good maintenance is essential in reducing the risk of trips, both indoors and outdoors.

Introduction

Flooring can become damaged and uneven over time presenting a trip hazard. Fixed installations to the exterior of a building (such as walkways and ladders) can also become damaged, particularly if they are exposed to harsh elements, creating additional trip or other access hazards. Lighting can become damaged or defective making trip hazards less easy to spot.

Regular periodic inspection, maintenance and repair are the keys to managing these trip risks. Many accidents can result from the poor maintenance of premises, affecting employees, visitors and members of the public.

Clearly, the extent of what is required will depend on the nature of the building and contractual obligations associated with the premises. For example, the responsibilities on tenants to maintain premises may not be the same as the responsibilities on those who are the owner or the occupier.

Best practice

These include:

- **Identify all walkways and other access routes that require periodic inspection and maintenance.** This should include all areas of responsibility such as private roads, footpaths, car parks, drainage, ramps, steps, stairs, lighting, external building components (such as, fixed ladders and walkways) etc.
- **Implement a well-planned and documented inspection/maintenance schedule** to identify trip hazards and other defects so that these are fixed in a timely manner.
- **Carry out periodic inspections** particularly those for access routes, pedestrian walkways, car parks and lighting. Any defects or damage should be identified and a plan documented for fixing the problem. Inspections should consider other issues that will affect how likely someone is to trip, such as whether areas need better lighting or existing light bulbs need replacing. Any hazards found and remedial action taken should be documented.

- **For issues that will take longer to fix**, prioritise the highest risks and determine the timescale for fixing each one.
- **For hazards that can't be fixed immediately**, highlight the hazard clearly or cordon it off with barriers if possible.
- **Carry out any required maintenance in a timely manner**, ensuring that the work is correctly planned

and that any precautions necessary are taken to protect those directly involved in the work, or anyone nearby. This is particularly important if there are time constraints to complete the work or it involves working whilst the premises are open to the public or outside of normal working hours.

- **If using contractors to complete maintenance work**, ensure that they are properly managed.

Challenges for historic properties

For some historic properties floors, steps and stairs will have become worn over centuries. In many cases, it would not be possible (or even desirable) to repair them. Here, other precautions will be necessary.

For many, constrained budgets can have a significant impact on the maintenance and upkeep of premises. In some cases, a lack of dedicated maintenance staff may also be a limitation.

The extent of the maintenance work that can be done to correct a trip hazard may be limited by any consent or planning requirements. This may be the case for listed buildings or scheduled monuments.



Broken paving should be noted during routine maintenance checks and suitable precautions taken until any damage can be repaired.

Other possible solutions

These include:

- **Lay temporary paths over historic cobbles or other challenging surfaces** to highlight and provide a safer access route.
- **Fill historic drainage channels with gravel** to remove the trip hazard as a quick, cheap and easy precaution.
- **Consider alternative engineering solutions** such as having tarmac car parks with gravel on top to increase durability whilst maintaining any historic features.
- **Where there is a longer lead time, prioritise maintenance jobs** to ensure that higher risks receive priority. This may be the largest trip hazard or the hazard in the most dangerous location, such as on the busiest walkway or outside a disabled toilet.
- **Manage visitor access** routes away from significant trip hazards.
- **Highlight trip hazards clearly** (see [module 6.3, Preventing trips: Walkways, highlighting trip hazards](#)).
- **Provide appropriate levels of lighting** so that challenging surfaces can be safely negotiated.
- **Advise wardens, guides or others** who may be on hand to inform visitors of any significant trip hazards they might encounter.
- **Provide accessible information for visitors** warning of any challenging areas and access issues. For example, this information can be highlighted on a website.

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.

