

SIMPLY SAFE MARCH 2010

SLIPS

Did you know that slips are the most common cause of major injuries at work? You may have seen the HSE campaign entitled 'Shattered Lives' which is seeking to raise awareness and offer guidance on reducing these occurrences in your workplace. This is also a significant focus of local authority environmental health departments who are seeking to tackle businesses who are not acting to reduce slip hazards.



Simply Safe has previously reported on Slips and Trips in April 2008, but there remain a significant number of accidents and incidents resulting from slips since. Slips have also been the result of an increasing number of civil claims against businesses and accidents involving slips result in a high number of enforcement enquiries.

Questions are being asked as to the suitability of floor surface types in areas where slips may or already have occurred. The nature of the flooring needs to be considered based upon the likely contaminant e.g. water or liquid, and the risk of possible contamination. For existing floors, the need to clean needs to be balanced with the need to move without the risk of slipping.

You should consider tasks such as cleaning which can increase the risks of slips in your workplace. Undertaking tasks such as mopping when there are few or no people around, will reduce the risk of accidents. The effective cleaning of floor surfaces can result in the retention of non-slip properties, whereas poor cleaning using the incorrect chemicals can make a slip more likely.

An example of a control for correct cleaning would be mixing the detergent to the correct amount with hot water and then leaving it on the floor for a period of time. This is more effective at removing grease than mopping it off immediately and therefore makes mopping more effective and the floor safer.

When considering new flooring, the slip resistance must always be a main consideration. Data is available from the suppliers or manufacturers of flooring and should be obtained and considered before purchasing.

Risk assessments should be carried out in your businesses to identify hazards which may result in slips and trips to staff, customers, contractors and anyone else who may have cause to come onto your premises.

It is necessary to identify areas of flooring which may become contaminated with water, food or oil from your work practices or as a result of other circumstances. Once identified, think about ways in which this contamination can be avoided. If it cannot be avoided, then think of ways the hazard can be identified and removed. Regular checking as well as dealing with spillages of liquid or food as soon as possible are controls that must be in place.

Slips are not simply a consequence of work and personal injuries can and must be avoided. Simple measures put into place can reduce the risk of slip accidents in your workplace. The cost of not managing slips can be grave and result in the loss of staff, possible civil actions and criminal proceedings. Effective controls and staff training is both desirable and a legal necessity.

A TO Z OF FOOD SAFETY

S is for ... Scores on the Doors



Most businesses will be aware of the food safety scoring schemes in place throughout the UK. The emphasis of Scores on the Doors is to provide choice to customers based upon food safety standards. The standards identified on EHO inspections are translated into a star rating which is then given to each food business. The idea is the better the standards, the more stars are given. Whilst not a nationally applied standard, there are more than 200 Authorities now applying it. The results of scores are made public on the Scores on the Doors website locally and nationally. Another reason to ensure that food safety standards are as high as possible.

CONTRACTOR SAFETY

Whenever your business brings another Company onto its premises to undertake works on their behalf, there are immediate responsibilities for both parties to seek to protect each other. Failure to meet these responsibilities can result in accidents and incidents that can prove costly in terms of delays in works being completed, claims and damages.

As the client, you need to consider what risks are posed by the works which you want to be carried out. One of the key responsibilities for you as a Client is choosing the right contractor for the job. Considerations regarding suitability should include whether the contractor has sufficient skills and knowledge to do the job safely ("competent"). Contractors may be nominated by your head office who will have already done checks on the contractors you use beforehand. If you are unsure, or are considering using a contractor who is not on a nominated list, you should seek advice.



Contractors for larger works may, but not always, be familiar with your type of business operation. You should still seek to review the scope of work activities undertaken to ensure your staff, customers and the staff of the contractor are not going to be put at risk. You should consider with the contractor the area where the work is taking place, the people in and around that area, the time of day when works are being carried out. You must also consider any hazards that may be present in the area and bring these to the contractor's attention. Some examples of hazards that you must consider include:

Asbestos (See last month's Simply Safe) / Electricity / Fire Safety / Noise / Working at Height

This is not an exhaustive list and your contractor may have other concerns which they should bring to your attention before the works commence. You should also consider whether your business operates a 'Permit to Work System' for some or all contractor works, as this should be discussed and completed prior to any contractor starting works.

It is essential for the safety of your business, staff and customers that you consider how any works being carried out may affect their safety. If the works are to be carried out in a staff or public area then information, signs and barriers to prevent persons other than the contractors from accessing the area will be needed. If the area cannot be made safe, then you will need to consider whether the works can be conducted whilst there are staff and customers present.

Effective safe working with contractors requires cooperation and agreement. If you note something which you are unhappy with or the contractor brings concerns to your attention, you must both listen and seek to resolve any problems. Failure to cooperate may result in unsafe work practices which in turn may result in unnecessary delays at best and serious accidents at worst! If you review the works of a contractor and are unhappy or unsure about any aspect of safety, you should speak to your contractor and stop the works rather than allow them to continue which could result in a possible accident.

Remember that you and the contractor have a legal obligation under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and under the health and safety Regulations to ensure that works carried out are safely. If you have any concerns regarding contractor safety the HSE publish a leaflet on line which provides more information at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg368.pdf> or you should contact your maintenance or surveyors departments or Perry Scott Nash for further advice.

VACUUM PACKING OF FOODS

Increasingly, vacuum packing machines are being seen as a solution which enables businesses to safely wrap foods and increase the effective shelf life of the wrapped product. The Food Standards Agency have issued guidance on the use of vacuum packing of food which provides clear details on the shelf life of vacuum packed foods to which food businesses must adhere. The reasons for strict controls over the vacuum packing of food are the increased risks of growth of *Clostridium botulinum* – a bacteria which thrives without oxygen and produces a dangerous toxin which can cause death if consumed.

In-house vacuum packing of any food can be an effective means of repacking food but;

- Once vacuum packed, foods must not be dated and stored for more than 10 days;
- This rule applies to ingredients which may be vacuum packed. If ingredients are vacuum packed then any product in which they are used must not be stored for longer than the remainder of the 10 days shelf life given to that ingredient.
- Foods which are opened and repacked must not be given a shelf life greater than the remainder of the original 10 day shelf life when the food was first packaged.
- Clear labelling must be applied to all vacuum packed foods. The burden of proof (as it is a critical control) as to whether these guidelines are complied with remains with food business.

If your business uses a vacuum packer, you should refer to your food safety manual or contact Perry Scott Nash for further advice.