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Articles in SafetyLine are intended to stimulate discussion and/or provide information on OSH issues. They do not necessarily reflect the policy of WorkSafe or the Commission for Occupational Safety and Health.

This publication is available on request in other formats to assist people with special needs

Preventing slip, trips and falls at work

Slips, trips and falls at the same level are the second most common cause of injury in Western Australia after muscular stress. There are about 2,450 slips and trips requiring time off work each year and 12 percent of all lost time injuries are a result of a slip, trip or fall.

The risk factors associated with a slip, trip or fall in the workplace are often multifaceted and like other hazards can involve both environmental and individual causes.

Slips

A spill on a floor surface, such as water or oil, or inadequate footwear can reduce friction increasing the risk of a slip occurring. Some of the primary risk factors for slips are:

- floor surface friction levels;
- variation in friction level between work areas ie. wet or dry;
- contaminated floor – such as water or oil;
- inappropriate matting eg. cardboard
- inclined surfaces; and
- footwear – low friction sole type and/or wearing of the sole.

Trips

Unexpected floor variations and excessive friction between footwear and the floor surface can increase the risk of trips. Other risk factors include:

- poorly maintained floors;
- variation in floor level;
- low objects on the ground, ie. trailing cables;
- obstructions in a walkway;
- clothing ie. long pants;
- poor step design;
- isolated, low and unexpected steps;
- unsecured rugs and mats; and
- poor lighting.

Falls

Falls, whether on the same level or from a height, involve a loss of balance. Spontaneous falls on the same level (not related to a slip or trip) may also occur when supporting surfaces give way or become unstable.

Factors that may increase the risk of a fall include:

- unstable surfaces;
- surface collapse;
- gaps between surfaces, such as loading docks;
- high surfaces lacking a hand-rail or guard rail;
- inadequate grip or step designs;
- small or missing landings; and
- restrictive clothing.

Additionally, an individual's ability to maintain upright balance may be affected by other external and personal factors:

External

Factors include:

- exposure to chemical substances that may cause dizziness or disorientation;
- poor lighting or sudden variation in lighting;
- noise and acoustic stimuli;
- workload;
- muscular fatigue;
- personal protective equipment use;
- work systems;
- time constraints leading to rushing; and
- certain medications.

Personal

Factors include:

- age;
- gender;
- visual ability;
- sense of balance;
- neurological function;
- muscle strength;
- work experience and skills; and
- developed/acquired balance and stability (from work or recreation);



Relevant WA OSH Legislation concerning slips, trips and falls (at the same level)

- S 19(1) General duty of care to provide and maintain a working environment in which employees are not exposed to hazards.
- Reg 3.1- Identify hazards, assess and address risks
- Reg 3.6- Movement around Workplaces
- Reg. 3.7- Access to and egress from workplaces
- Reg 3.17- Ensure that the workplace is maintained in a clean condition to avoid hazards
- Reg 3.13- Lighting must be adequate for the movement of persons about the workplace.

- Reg 3.14- Employer must provide employee with sufficient space in which to work.
- Reg 3.18- Surfaces and floors
 - the floor of the workplace or any stair or ramp in workplace has an unbroken and slip resistant surface and is free from any obstruction that may cause a person to trip or fall.
 - the floor is designed and constructed to provide adequate drainage if a risk of liquids coming into contact with a floor because of nature of work done.

For more information visit:

www.worksafe.wa.gov.au Safety topics -> Slips and trips

Code of practice: Working hours

Some working hours arrangements, such as extended hours, shift work and on call work, have been linked to increased fatigue, leading to impaired performance and increased exposure to a range of hazards.

The code of practice: Working hours was released was released in July 2006, and is now available free of charge from the website and for purchase from WorkSafe.

The code provides practical guidance on common hazards that could arise from the working hours arrangements. It contains risk management guidelines, which indicate the general level of risk for a range of hazard factors including:

- average weekly hours;
- length of shifts;

- number of night shifts;
- repetitive and demanding work;
- extended exposure to hazardous substances; and,
- noise.

The code suggests a range of control measures that employers can implement. For example, designing working hours to allow for good quality sleep and sufficient recovery time or rescheduling higher risk work for times when people are normally awake.

Where employees believe there may be safety and health risks from their working hours arrangements they should raise the matter with their employer, elected safety and health representatives and/or the safety and health committee where they exist.

The *Code of practice: Working hours* can be found at www.worksafe.wa.gov.au Legislation – Codes of Practice

CREATING a safety culture at work: Work Safe 2007 forums

Update your safety knowledge and meet likeminded people with an interest in workplace safety by attending the annual Work Safe Forums. These information sessions are designed for elected safety and health representatives, although other workplace staff, supervisors and managers are welcome to attend.

Two forums are scheduled for 2007:

Bunbury 22 May at the South-West Italian Club, White Street, Bunbury – registration brochure available 10 April. Book early as registrations close 15 May.

Perth 22 October at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre

For more information visit www.worksafe.wa.gov.au/forums, email promotions@docep.wa.gov.au or call (08) 327 8697.

Safe Work Australia Week: 21 - 27 October 2007

Safe work is about preventing workplace incidents and managing injuries.

Workplaces across Australia will be organising activities during Safe Work Australia Week 2007. In Western Australia there are two ways workplaces can participate:

- **Run an event or activity in your workplace** Register your activity with WorkSafe to receive a poster kit and be in the draw to win a ticket to the Perth Work Safe 2007 forum.

- **Run an event or activity for others** The deadline for listing on the calendar of events is 16 July 2007.

For more information visit:

www.worksafe.wa.gov.au/SWAWeek, email promotions@docep.wa.gov.au or call (08) 9327 8608.

Safety in Cafés and Restaurants

Recently WorkSafe inspected a number of cafés and restaurants in the metropolitan area. These inspections have provided WorkSafe with valuable insight on the major OSH issues within this industry. These are:

- manual handling;
- slips, trips and falls; and
- guarding of machinery.

Manual handling

Manual handling is one of the most common safety issues in cafes and restaurants. Workers are at risk of suffering a manual handling injury not only when lifting and handling heavy objects, but also while undertaking tasks that require reaching and stretching. This includes accessing items in badly designed storage areas, reaching for tools, or moving/carrying food or equipment. Injuries may also result from poor posture and repetitive tasks.

Industry injury data shows that kitchen hands, cooks, waiters and chefs across all age categories sustain the highest number of injuries. Most of the injuries occur when lifting, handling or reaching and most commonly result in sprains and strains of muscles and joints.

Induction training for employees is an important to address many of these issues. Teaching new and current workers how best to approach a task involving manual handling in your workplace can help to reduce the number of injuries suffered.

Slips trips and falls

Most slip, trip and fall injuries occur from falling on oily/slippery floors and/or surfaces that have been

obstructed. The injured worker often suffers from fractures, sprains, bruises and cuts.

Identifying hazards such as obstructions, inadequate lighting, and changes in surface friction can help a workplace to assess the risks posed and make the changes needed to reduce the risk.

Guarding of machinery

Commonly used items such as mixers can be a hazardous if not adequately guarded. Worker's hands and fingers can come into direct contact with the attachments leading to severe injuries and even amputation. Aprons, gloves and ties have been known to tangle themselves around moving parts of machinery and cause serious injury by pulling the operator into the mixer. Spatulas, spoons and other hand-held tools can also make contact with the moving parts causing them to eject or to draw the operator's hand into the attachment.

Placing a guard on potentially dangerous machinery such as mixers prevents fingers, hands and other objects being pulled into the machine and causing injury. WorkSafe's bulletin *Food preparation mixer guarding*, containing information on the guarding of mixers.

More information

WorkSafe has released a series of bulletins which focus on safety issues in cafes and restaurants. These bulletins can be downloaded from the WorkSafe website, www.worksafe.wa.gov.au.

Resources -> Publications -> Bulletins

Investigating an accident or incident

After an accident or dangerous incident, an investigation is vital and every detail counts. It provides valuable information that can assist in determining what happened and the actions required to prevent a similar incident in the future.

Investigations should be carried out by a team so everyone can contribute their skills and expertise. One of the duties of safety and health representatives under the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984* is to participate in investigations.

A common practice in an accident/incident investigation is to look for the cause, however this can be restrictive as it focuses attention on only one or at best a very few, of the risk factors. Others, that may be more easily controlled, pass unnoticed.

The WorkSafe bulletin *Tips for investigating accidents and incidents*, available online, will assist organisations to investigate accidents or incidents. The publication provides information on how to conduct an investigation and what to look for during the investigation. This includes:

- events leading up to the accident;
- facts of the incident itself;
- facts regarding what occurred immediately after the incident; and
- essential factors and causes.

The bulletin also has a helpful section on establishing the facts and how to determine recommendations and conclusions.

To download a copy of this bulletin, please visit www.worksafe.wa.gov.au Resources -> Publications -> Bulletins

4THOUGHT - lunchtime information sessions

WorkSafe is planning to hold lunchtime information sessions throughout 2007. The sessions will be free of charge and will cover a range of OSH topics. The sessions will run from 12.00 noon to 1.30pm. Bring your lunch and participate in a session which we hope will get you to think about safety issues at your workplace.

For venue details, bookings and enquires please contact Lin Stain on 9327 8777 or email worksafersvp@docep.wa.gov.au. Bookings are essential.

Sessions being offered are:

Friday 27 April 2007	Violence and bullying	Friday 27 July 2007	Working hours
Friday 18 May 2007	Violence and bullying	Monday 20 August 2007	Safety and health investigations
Monday 18 June 2007	Working hours	Friday 24 August 2007	Safety and health investigations
Friday 22 June 2007	Working hours	Monday 17 September 2007	Cultural change in workplaces
Monday 23 July 2007	Working hours	Friday 21 September 2007	Cultural change in workplaces