



Clearing the way to avoid risk

With the cold winter months approaching, companies should start thinking about what action they should take to minimise the threat of slips and trips. Last year saw many parts of Britain under snow for long periods and there was a sharp rise in claims made against property owners for injury following slips on ice and snow whilst on their premises. Without proof that the company has implemented an extensive action plan to minimise risk, and to safeguard staff, clients and visitors, it can become difficult to defend liability.

Icy Conditions

Slips and trips can occur during the cold and icy months of winter. To help prevent these injuries, the Health and Safety Executive advise businesses to implement a risk strategy for icy conditions.

The risk strategy should include: identifying risk areas, monitoring temperatures, using grit, erecting warning signs and/or cordoning off troublesome areas. IOSH wants to encourage businesses to be good employers and neighbours by gritting beyond property boundaries and to make sure the task is carried out thoroughly.

Risk Strategy-

- Monitoring temperature is key. You need to take action whenever freezing temperatures are forecast. Do this by keeping up-to-date with a weather service website.
- Gritting should be carried out when frost, ice or snow is forecast. Remember, salt doesn't work instantly; it needs sufficient time to dissolve.
- Divert visitors to less slippery walkways.
- Think about how your clients and staff access buildings and consider gritting access areas to help them come and go safely.
- Pay more attention to steps or steep slopes. These areas may need more salt or grit.
- It is easier to move soft snow, so start removing the snow and ice as soon as possible. During the day, allow the sunshine to melt the ice and snow and cover with salt before nightfall to stop refreezing overnight.
- During periods of extreme cold, continue to monitor the situation throughout the day and evening, make regular inspections of all walkways and re-grit where necessary.

- Heavy rainfall can wash away grit and salt. As soon as possible after rain, check to establish any necessary re-gritting.
- Make a record of all preventative and snow clearing activity as this may support any claim of negligence that may be brought against you.
- Make sure all members of staff have been made aware of the action being taken and the safest routes for entry to and exit from the premises.

Don't-

- Use water to melt snow as it may turn to black ice.
- Leave it to the last minute to purchase extra salt and grit. Local stocks have run out in previous years.
- Block access areas with shovelled snow.
- Forget to re-grit after heavy rainfall.



Useful sites for details and information of how to deal with the icy conditions-
Health and Safety Executive - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/slips/faq.htm>
Highways Agency - <http://www.highways.gov.uk/knowledge/333.aspx>
BBC Weather - <http://news.bbc.co.uk/weather/>