

Slips, Trips and Falls Guidance for Local URC Churches

Applies to: Local churches, church halls, offices, centres, manses and all activities undertaken by employees, ministers, volunteers, trustees, elders, contractors, hirers and visitors

Purpose

The United Reformed Church is committed to providing safe premises for all who use its buildings and grounds.

Slips, trips and falls are among the most common causes of injury in workplaces and public buildings. They can result in cuts, sprains, fractures, head injuries and, particularly for older people, serious long-term health consequences. HSE guidance identifies slips and trips as one of the leading causes of workplace accidents and stresses the importance of prevention through risk assessment and good housekeeping.

This guidance sets out the arrangements local churches should adopt to reduce the risk of slips, trips and falls and comply with relevant health and safety legislation.

Relevant Legislation

This guidance supports compliance with health and safety legislation applicable across Great Britain, including England, Scotland and Wales.

The principal legislation includes:

- **Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974:** This Act places duties on employers, those in control of premises, employees and others to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of those affected by their activities. This includes taking reasonable steps to prevent slips, trips and falls.
- **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999:** These Regulations require risks to be assessed and appropriate control measures implemented to protect employees, volunteers, contractors, visitors and members of the public from foreseeable harm. This includes risks arising from slips, trips and falls.
- **Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992:** These Regulations require floors and traffic routes to be suitable, maintained in a safe condition and kept free from obstructions. People must be able to move around premises safely.
- **Occupiers' Liability Acts 1957 and 1984 (England and Wales):** These Acts impose a duty on those responsible for premises to take reasonable care for the safety of visitors and, in certain circumstances, trespassers.
- **Occupiers' Liability (Scotland) Act 1960:** In Scotland, similar duties apply to those responsible for premises to take reasonable care to avoid foreseeable injury or damage to persons entering onto land or premises.
- **Equality Act 2010:** Churches should consider the needs of disabled people and others who may be placed at a substantial disadvantage by physical barriers, poor maintenance, inadequate lighting or unsafe access arrangements.

Local churches should ensure their buildings, halls, external areas and activities are managed in a way that provides safe access and movement for all users, including employees, volunteers, congregation members, hirers, contractors and visitors. While health and safety law is largely consistent across England, Scotland and Wales, churches should be aware of any local authority

requirements or guidance that may apply in their area.

Scope

This guidance applies to:

- Worship services
- Community activities
- Meetings and events
- Children's work
- Youth activities
- Coffee mornings
- Concerts and performances
- External grounds and car parks
- Church halls and ancillary buildings

The guidance applies to:

- Employees
- Ministers
- Trustees and Elders
- Volunteers
- Hirers
- Contractors
- Congregation members
- Visitors and members of the public

Responsibilities

Church Trustees and Elders

Must:

- Ensure risks are assessed and controlled
- Maintain buildings and grounds in a safe condition
- Ensure defects are reported and addressed promptly
- Monitor slip and trip risks
- Consider the needs of vulnerable users

Employees and Volunteers

Must:

- Take reasonable care for their own safety and that of others
- Report hazards promptly
- Follow church procedures
- Keep areas tidy and free from obstruction.

Risk Assessment

Churches should assess areas where slips, trips or falls may occur and implement appropriate control measures. Particular consideration should be given to:

- Entrances and exits
- Steps and stairways
- Kitchens
- Toilets
- Church halls

- Storage areas
- Car parks
- Paths and walkways
- External grounds
- Seasonal events

Risk assessments should be reviewed regularly and whenever significant changes occur.

Common Causes of Slips, Trips and Falls in Churches

Common hazards include:

Slipping Hazards

- Wet floors
- Rainwater at entrances
- Recently cleaned floors
- Spillages
- Icy pathways
- Wet leaves
- Polished surfaces

Tripping Hazards

- Trailing cables
- Loose floor coverings
- Uneven flooring
- Poorly stored equipment
- Boxes in walkways
- Bags and personal belongings
- Damaged paving slabs

Falling Hazards

- Poor lighting
- Defective handrails
- Changes in floor level
- Unmarked steps
- Cluttered stairways

These hazards are frequently identified by HSE as causes of slips and trips.

Housekeeping

Good housekeeping is one of the most effective ways of preventing slips and trips. Churches should ensure:

- Walkways remain clear
- Equipment is stored safely
- Waste is removed promptly
- Furniture does not obstruct escape routes
- Deliveries are put away promptly
- Bags and personal belongings do not create hazards

Particular care should be taken before and after worship services and community events.

Floors and Floor Coverings

All floors should be:

- Suitable for their intended use
- Maintained in good condition
- Free from defects where reasonably practicable

Churches should:

- Repair damaged flooring promptly
- Secure loose carpets and mats
- Remove curled edges
- Replace worn floor coverings
- Use flooring suitable for areas prone to becoming wet

Defects should be reported immediately.

Entrances and Exits

Entrances are common locations for slip accidents, particularly during wet weather.

Churches should:

- Provide suitable entrance mats
- Inspect entrances regularly
- Remove excess water
- Display warning signs where necessary
- Ensure adequate lighting

Special attention should be given during periods of rain, snow and ice.

Cables and Electrical Equipment

Trailing cables are a common trip hazard. Where possible:

- Use permanent power supplies
- Route cables away from walkways
- Use cable covers where required
- Avoid running cables across routes

Temporary event equipment should be assessed before use.

Stairs and Steps

Stairs and changes in floor level should be maintained in a safe condition. Churches should ensure:

- Handrails are secure
- Stairways are adequately lit
- Defects are repaired promptly
- Edges of steps are clearly visible
- Items are not stored on stairs or landing

Lighting

Adequate lighting is essential to reduce slip and trip risks. Churches should ensure:

- Internal lighting is sufficient

- external lighting is maintained
- Defective bulbs are replaced promptly
- Car parks and pathways are adequately illuminated

Particular attention should be given during winter months and evening activities.

External Areas

Church grounds require regular inspection. Particular attention should be given to:

- Paths
- Walkways
- Car parks
- Ramps
- External steps
- Churchyards and cemeteries

Churches should address:

- Uneven surfaces
- Potholes
- Moss and algae
- Fallen leaves
- Snow and ice

Weather-related hazards should be monitored regularly.

Weather Conditions

During adverse weather, churches should consider:

- Gritting pathways
- Removing snow where safe to do so
- Displaying warning signs
- Restricting access to unsafe areas
- Increasing inspection frequencies

Decisions should be proportionate to the level of risk.

Vulnerable Persons and Accessibility

Particular consideration should be given to:

- Older people
- Children and young people
- Wheelchair users
- People with mobility impairments
- People with visual impairments
- People with learning disabilities
- Individuals with temporary injuries

Churches should take reasonable steps to ensure that access routes, circulation spaces and means of escape can be used safely by all building users. Consideration should be given to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the needs of individuals who may be more susceptible to injury from slips, trips and falls.

Events and Temporary Activities

Additional hazards may arise during:

- Weddings
- Funerals
- Concerts
- Christmas services
- Fairs
- Community events

Churches should assess:

- Temporary cables
- Additional furniture
- Increased occupancy
- Temporary displays
- Outdoor activities

Event organisers should ensure walkways and exits remain clear.

Warning Signs

Temporary warning signs should be used where hazards cannot immediately be removed. Examples include:

- Wet floors
- Cleaning activities
- Temporary defects
- Icy surfaces

Signs should be removed once the hazard no longer exists.

Accident Reporting

All slip, trip and fall incidents should be reported and recorded. Records should include:

- Date and time
- Location
- Circumstances
- Injuries sustained
- Immediate action taken

Near misses should be recorded where appropriate. Incident reports should be reviewed to identify recurring hazards and improvement opportunities.

Inspection Checklist

Churches should periodically check:

- ☐ Floors are in good condition
- ☐ Carpets and mats are secure
- ☐ Walkways are clear
- ☐ Lighting is adequate
- ☐ Stairways are safe

- ☐ Handrails are secure
- ☐ Entrances are free from water build-up
- ☐ Cables are properly managed
- ☐ External paths are maintained
- ☐ Weather-related risks have been assessed
- ☐ Hazards are reported and addressed promptly

Slips, Trips and Falls Risk Assessment Template

Purpose: This template should be used to assess and control slip, trip and fall hazards within church buildings, halls, offices, external grounds, and during church activities and events.

This assessment should be completed by a competent person and reviewed periodically, following an incident, or where significant changes occur.

Church Details

Church Name: _____

Location/Area Assessed: _____

Assessment Date: _____

Assessor: _____

Review Date: _____

Activity or Area Being Assessed

Describe the area, activity or event being assessed:

Examples may include:

- Worship services
- Church hall use
- Coffee mornings
- Weddings or funerals
- Children's activities
- Car parks and pathways
- Kitchens
- Storage areas
- Seasonal events

Who Might Be Hamed?

Tick all that apply:

- ☐ Employees
- ☐ Ministers
- ☐ Volunteers
- ☐ Trustees/Elders

- ☐ Congregation Members
- ☐ Children and Young People
- ☐ Older People
- ☐ Disabled Persons
- ☐ Contractors
- ☐ Hirers
- ☐ Visitors
- ☐ Members of the Public
- ☐ Other: _____

Hazard Identification

Tick any hazards identified:

Internal Areas

- ☐ Wet floors
- ☐ Recently cleaned floors
- ☐ Loose carpets or mats
- ☐ Damaged flooring
- ☐ Uneven surfaces
- ☐ Cluttered walkways
- ☐ Trailing cables
- ☐ Poor lighting
- ☐ Defective stairs
- ☐ Missing or damaged handrails
- ☐ Inappropriate storage
- ☐ Other: _____

External Areas

- ☐ Uneven paving
- ☐ Potholes
- ☐ Moss or algae
- ☐ Fallen leaves
- ☐ Ice or snow
- ☐ Standing water
- ☐ Poor lighting
- ☐ Defective steps
- ☐ Sloping surfaces
- ☐ Tree roots

☐ Other: _____

Event-Related Hazards

- ☐ Temporary electrical cables
- ☐ Additional furniture
- ☐ Increased occupancy
- ☐ Temporary displays
- ☐ Outdoor activities
- ☐ Deliveries or equipment movement
- ☐ Other: _____

Existing Control Measures

What controls are already in place?

Tick those that apply:

- ☐ Good housekeeping arrangements
- ☐ Regular inspections
- ☐ Cleaning procedures in place
- ☐ Warning signs available
- ☐ Adequate lighting
- ☐ Entrance matting
- ☐ Secure floor coverings
- ☐ Handrails provided
- ☐ Winter maintenance arrangements
- ☐ Cable management systems
- ☐ Routine maintenance programme
- ☐ Staff/volunteer awareness
- ☐ Defect reporting process
- ☐ Other: _____

Risk Assessment

Hazard Identified	Persons at Risk	Existing Controls	Risk Level (L/M/H)

Additional Control Measures Required

Action Required	Responsible Person	Target Date	Completed
			☐
			☐
			☐
			☐

Vulnerable Persons Assessment

Have you considered the needs of:

Category	Yes	No	N/A
Older people	☐	☐	☐
Children and young people	☐	☐	☐
Wheelchair users	☐	☐	☐
Persons with impaired mobility	☐	☐	☐
Persons with visual impairments	☐	☐	☐
Other accessibility requirements	☐	☐	☐

Comments:

External Area Assessment

Where applicable, have the following been checked?

Check	Yes	No	N/A
Paths are in good condition	☐	☐	☐
Steps are safe and well maintained	☐	☐	☐
Lighting is adequate	☐	☐	☐
Car park surfaces are safe	☐	☐	☐
Drainage is effective	☐	☐	☐
Winter maintenance arrangements are in place	☐	☐	☐
External hazards are monitored regularly	☐	☐	☐

Event Assessment (Complete for Events and Special Activities)

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Temporary hazards assessed	☐	☐	☐
Walkways kept clear	☐	☐	☐
Electrical cable managed safely	☐	☐	☐
Additional lighting provided if needed	☐	☐	☐
Capacity of venue considered	☐	☐	☐
Additional supervision provided	☐	☐	☐

Assessment Outcome

Overall Risk Rating:

- ☐ Low
☐ Medium
☐ High

Assessment Outcome:

- ☐ Acceptable to proceed
☐ Additional controls required
☐ Immediate action required

Comments:

Assessor Declaration

I confirm that I have assessed the risks associated with slips, trips and falls in the area/activity identified above and have recorded the findings accurately.

Name: _____

Role: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Review Checklist

This assessment should be reviewed:

- ☐ Annually
- ☐ Following an accident or near miss
- ☐ Following significant alterations to premises
- ☐ Following a change in activities or events
- ☐ Following identification of new hazards
- ☐ Following severe weather-related incidents

Remember: Most slips, trips and falls can be prevented through good housekeeping, regular inspections, prompt maintenance and effective risk management. A hazard identified today may become an accident tomorrow if not addressed promptly.

Appendix B: Church Premises Inspection Checklist

Church Premises Inspection Checklist

Purpose: This checklist should be completed regularly to help identify slip, trip and fall hazards within church buildings, halls, offices, external grounds, car parks and other church-owned premises.

Recommended Frequency:

- Weekly for frequently used areas
- Monthly for all premises
- Before major services or events
- Following severe weather
- Following alterations or maintenance work
- Following an accident or near miss

Church Name: _____

Area Inspected: _____

Date of Inspection: _____

Inspected By: _____

Entrances and Exits

Check	Yes	No	Action Required
Main entrances are free from obstructions	☐	☐	
Entrance mats are secure and in good condition	☐	☐	
Floors near entrances are dry and safe	☐	☐	
Door thresholds are in good condition	☐	☐	
Exit routes are clearly accessible	☐	☐	
Emergency exits are unobstructed	☐	☐	

Internal Floors and Walkways

Check	Yes	No	Action Required
Flooring is in good condition	☐	☐	
No loose, worn or damaged carpets	☐	☐	
Floor coverings are securely fixed	☐	☐	
Walkways are free from clutter	☐	☐	
No boxes or stored items obstruct	☐	☐	

routes			
Spillages have been addressed promptly	☐	☐	
Cleaning materials are stored safely	☐	☐	

Stairs and Steps

Check	Yes	No	Action Required
Stairways are free from obstructions	☐	☐	
Handrails are secure	☐	☐	
Stair coverings are secure and undamaged	☐	☐	
Step edges are clearly visible	☐	☐	
Adequate lighting is provided	☐	☐	
No defects visible on stairs or landings	☐	☐	

Lighting

Check	Yes	No	Action Required
Internal lighting is adequate	☐	☐	
External lighting is operational	☐	☐	
Light fittings are in good condition	☐	☐	
Defective bulbs have been replaced	☐	☐	
Car parks and pathways are adequately lit	☐	☐	

Electrical Cables and Equipment

Check	Yes	No	Action Required
No trailing cables in walkways	☐	☐	
Temporary cables are protected	☐	☐	
Extension leads are used safely	☐	☐	
Audio-visual and event equipment positioned safely	☐	☐	
Charging cables do not create trip hazards	☐	☐	

Furniture and Storage

Check	Yes	No	Action Required
Chairs and tables stored safely	☐	☐	
Storage areas organised and tidy	☐	☐	
Heavy items stored appropriately	☐	☐	
Access routes within storage areas are clear	☐	☐	
Shelving appears stable and secure	☐	☐	

Kitchen and Refreshment Areas

Check	Yes	No	Action Required
Floors are clean and dry	☐	☐	
Spillages are dealt with promptly	☐	☐	
Cleaning equipment stored safely	☐	☐	
Walkways remain clear during activities	☐	☐	
Waste is removed regularly	☐	☐	

Toilets and Wash Areas

Check	Yes	No	Action Required
Floors are dry and safe	☐	☐	
Leaks have not been identified	☐	☐	
Adequate lighting provided	☐	☐	
Access routes are clear	☐	☐	
Floor surfaces are in good condition	☐	☐	

External Areas

Check	Yes	No	Action Required
Paths are free from obstructions	☐	☐	
Path surfaces are in good condition	☐	☐	
Steps are safe and well maintained	☐	☐	
Handrails are secure where provided	☐	☐	
Car parks are free from significant hazards	☐	☐	
Drainage issues are not evident	☐	☐	
Moss, algae or leaf build-up controlled	☐	☐	

No significant potholes or uneven surfaces	☐	☐	
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Seasonal and Weather-Related Hazards

Check	Yes	No	Action Required
Winter gritting arrangements available	☐	☐	
Snow and ice plans in place	☐	☐	
Fallen leaves removed where necessary	☐	☐	
Weather-related hazards monitored	☐	☐	
Unsafe areas can be isolated if required	☐	☐	

Accessibility Considerations

Check	Yes	No	Action Required
Routes suitable for people with mobility impairments	☐	☐	
Ramps are in good condition	☐	☐	
Handrails are provided where required	☐	☐	
Access routes are free from unnecessary obstacles	☐	☐	
Signage is clear and visible	☐	☐	

Events and Temporary Activities

Where applicable:

Check	Yes	No	N/A
Temporary displays are secure	☐	☐	☐
Additional furniture does not obstruct routes	☐	☐	☐
Temporary cables are managed safely	☐	☐	☐
Crowd movement routes remain clear	☐	☐	☐
Additional hazards have been assessed	☐	☐	☐

Defects and Hazards Identified

Ref	Defect/Hazard Identified	Priority (High/Medium/Low)	Action Required
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

Inspection Outcome

- ☐ No significant issues identified
- ☐ Minor issues identified and action planned
- ☐ Significant hazards identified requiring immediate action

Inspector Declaration

I confirm that I have inspected the areas identified above and recorded any hazards or defects requiring attention.

Name: _____

Role: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Follow-Up Review

Reviewed By: _____

Date Reviewed: _____

Actions Completed: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Further Action Required: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments:

Guidance Note

Any defect presenting an immediate risk of injury should be made safe without delay. This may include isolating an area, displaying warning signage, restricting access, arranging urgent repairs, or suspending an activity until the hazard has been addressed.

Accident and Near-Miss Report Form

Purpose: This form should be used to record all slips, trips and falls, injuries, dangerous occurrences and near-miss incidents occurring on church premises or during church activities.

Recording and reviewing incidents helps local churches identify hazards, prevent recurrence and demonstrate effective health and safety management.

Guidance Note: A near miss is any unplanned event that did not result in injury, illness or damage, but had the potential to do so. Near misses should be reported and investigated with the same seriousness as accidents, as they provide valuable opportunities to prevent future incidents.

All completed forms should be retained in accordance with the church's incident reporting and data retention procedures.

Section 1: Incident Details

Church Name: _____

Location of Incident: _____

Date of Incident: _____

Time of Incident: _____

Reported By: _____

Date Reported: _____

Section 2: Type of Incident

Please tick as appropriate

- ☐ Slip
- ☐ Trip
- ☐ Fall on the same level
- ☐ Fall from a height
- ☐ Injury
- ☐ Near Miss
- ☐ Dangerous Occurrence
- ☐ Property Damage
- ☐ Other

Please specify:

Section 3: Person Involved

Name: _____

Contact Number: _____

Address (if visitor): _____

Status:

☐ Employee

☐ Volunteer

☐ Minister

☐ Trustee/Elder

☐ Church Member

☐ Visitor

☐ Contractor

☐ Hirer

☐ Child/Young Person

☐ Other: _____

Section 4: Description of Incident

Please provide a detailed description of what happened:

Section 5: Location and Cause

Where did the incident occur:

☐ Sanctuary

☐ Church Hall

☐ Kitchen

- ☐ Toilet facilities
- ☐ Office
- ☐ Entrance/foyer
- ☐ Stairway
- ☐ Car park
- ☐ Church grounds
- ☐ Pathway
- ☐ Other: _____

What contributed to the incident?

- ☐ Wet floor
- ☐ Uneven surface
- ☐ Poor lighting
- ☐ Trailing cable
- ☐ Loose carpet or mat
- ☐ Obstruction in walkway
- ☐ Weather conditions
- ☐ Damaged step
- ☐ Lack of handrail
- ☐ Housekeeping issue
- ☐ Other: _____

Section 6: Injury Details

Was anyone injured?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If **Yes**:

Nature of injury:

- ☐ Cut
- ☐ Bruise
- ☐ Sprain
- ☐ Strain
- ☐ Fracture
- ☐ Head Injury
- ☐ Back Injury
- ☐ Shock
- ☐ Other: _____

Body Part Affected:

Section 7: Treatment Provided

- ☐ No treatment provided
- ☐ First Aid provided
- ☐ GP/Medical treatment
- ☐ Hospital treatment
- ☐ Ambulance called
- ☐ Emergency Services attended

Details:

Section 8; Witness Information

Were there any witnesses?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Witness 1

Name: _____

Contact Details: _____

Statement:

Witness 2

Name: _____

Contact Details: _____

Statement:

Section 9: Immediate Action Taken

Tick all that apply:

- ☐ Hazard removed
- ☐ Area cordoned off
- ☐ Warning signs displayed
- ☐ Defect reported
- ☐ Maintenance request raised
- ☐ Activity stopped
- ☐ First aid provided
- ☐ Other: _____

Section 10: Near-Miss Details

(To be completed if no injury occurred)

Describe what happened and what could have happened:

Lessons identified:

Section 11: Investigation Findings

Root cause(s) identified:

Contributing factors:

Section 12: Corrective Action

Action Required	Responsible Person	Target Date	Date Completed

Section 13: RIDDOR Consideration

Has this incident been assessed for reporting under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Not Applicable

If reportable:

RIDDOR Reference Number: _____

Date Reported: _____

Section 14: Review and Sign-Off

Person Completing Report

Name: _____

Role: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Responsible Person/Trustee/Elder

Name: _____

Role: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Incident Review Summary

Following review, this incident has been classified as:

- ☐ Minor Incident
- ☐ Significant incident
- ☐ Near miss
- ☐ Serious incident
- ☐ Requires further investigation

Have control measures been reviewed?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Has the relevant risk assessment been updated?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not required