

Health & Safety Reps

Help / Advice / Info

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eis



Cleaning in Schools and Colleges

Advice to Members

Cleaning in Schools and Colleges

Health & Safety Law

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 (as amended) specify minimum standards for most workplaces including schools, colleges and universities. These Regulations expand on duties on employers under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

Regulation 9 covers cleanliness and waste materials. Regulation 9(1) specifies that “every workplace and the furniture, furnishings and fittings therein shall be kept sufficiently clean.” Regulation 9 (2) specifies that “the surfaces of the floors, walls and ceilings of all workplaces inside buildings shall be capable of being kept sufficiently clean.” Regulation 9 (3) specifies that “so far as is reasonably practicable, waste materials shall not be allowed to accumulate in a workplace except in suitable receptacles.”

According to the Health and Safety Executive, sufficiently clean means that “workplaces should be regularly cleaned to ensure that dirt or refuse is not allowed to accumulate and spillages and deposits are removed or cleaned up as soon as possible.” The frequency of this activity and standard of cleanliness will depend on the nature of the business. In addition, cleaning should be carried out “...by an effective and suitable method and without creating, or exposing anyone to, a health or safety risk.”

Floors and Traffic Routes

Regulation 12 contains specific requirements for employers relating to the condition of floors and traffic routes. Regulation 12(3) specifies that “so far as is reasonably practicable, every floor in a workplace and the surface of every traffic route in a workplace shall be kept free from obstructions and from any article or substance which may cause a person to slip, trip or fall”.

Floors and traffic routes must be suitable and should not expose persons to risks by being uneven, slippery or by having holes. There should be effective means of drainage. They should be kept free, so far as is reasonably practicable, from obstructions, articles or substances likely to cause slips, trips or falls. Handrails must be provided on staircases.



Report It

All accidents and injuries should be reported. No matter how trivial members consider an injury to be, members must ensure that it is reported and recorded in the accident book at the time it happens. Injuries which seem trivial at the time can have longer term serious consequences and the existence of a record can, as mentioned above, subsequently be very important in securing compensation.

Slips and Trips

Slips and trips are the most common cause of injury at work. Most slips occur when floors become wet or contaminated. To prevent slips and trips, employers should:

- **stop floors getting wet or contaminated in the first place;**
- **have effective arrangements for both routine cleaning and dealing with spills;**
- **remove spillages promptly;**
- **leave smooth floors dry after cleaning or exclude pedestrians until the floor is dry;**
- **use the right cleaning methods for your floor;**
- **look out for trip hazards (e.g. uneven floors, trailing cables);**
- **consider the use of slip-resistant flooring material.**



These effective preventative measures can be instituted without great expense. Instituting proper procedures for routine cleaning of floors and cleaning up of spillages, adequate lighting and wearing of sensible footwear are, however, easily achieved.

Advice for EIS Reps

Where any EIS member is injured at work, EIS representatives and/or EIS health and safety representatives should also take the following further steps in order to protect the member's interests:

- **make sure not only that management has been informed about the incident;**
- **investigate the circumstances (these investigations are part of the safety rep's statutory rights to undertake inspections);**
- **make your own record of what happened, including taking statements from any witnesses or noting down who the witnesses were;**
- **make sure that a proper record is also made by the school as outlined above;**
- **make sure that photographs of any injuries are taken - many doctors will do this but if they have not, take your own;**
- **Complete an EIS accident claim form and return it to the EIS Employment Relations Department.**

Who to Contact First

Where members have issues regarding the routine cleaning of floors, furniture and fittings and the cleaning up of spillages these should be discussed in the first instance with establishment EIS representatives and/or EIS health and safety representatives. Thereafter, EIS representatives and/or EIS health and safety representatives should raise these matters with management and should record these concerns in writing.

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