

know risk

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Slips and trips in Churches

It really does happen!

A public building owner who had provided safe floor conditions was successfully prosecuted when a visitor came in from the rain and spread water about the floor.

Despite the victim having introduced the water on which she subsequently slipped, the building owner was found liable because the owner should have provided flooring or matting that provided for this contingency.

- “Slips and Trips” is a phrase used to describe incidents where a person is injured from a fall caused by slipping on a slippery floor surface, tripping over a low level obstruction or other similar types of accidents.
- In 2004, Ansvar Insurance paid more than \$1million towards Slip and Trip claims.
- The National Safety Council of Australia suggests that slips, trips and falls are among the most common causes of non-fatal injuries reported by the public.
- Churches have a legal obligation (Duty of Care) to provide a safe environment for worshipers, employees and visitors. A serious injury to an employee or contractor could result in criminal charges.

- A serious injury which occurs as a result of negligent inaction will have a detrimental effect upon the church and its ministry.

SLIP & TRIP HAZARDS

- Wet Areas - such as entrance halls, toilets, kitchens, wash areas, baptisteries all require special attention to ensure floor areas are constantly dry.
- Floor Surfaces – areas in poor condition such as uplifting carpets, cracked tiles, buckling paths and uneven surfaces are likely to cause injury.
- Steps and Stairs – are sometimes unseen by pedestrians and can be tricky for the elderly.
- Obstructions – such as electrical leads trailing across walkways, toys in play areas and clutter in store rooms can be a problem.
- Poor Lighting – contributes to the problems caused by other hazards.
- Poor Housekeeping - congested walkways and emergency exits are a hazard.
- Outdoor Paths – can be a problem, particularly in winter when wet, covered with wet leaves and wherever moss is growing.

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Take action

- Be vigilant, look around you, be aware of what can happen and encourage others to report problem areas.
- Make sure all steps and uneven surfaces are marked in yellow or white colours and brought to the attention of people who must negotiate them.
- Install hand rails on stairs and tricky steps.
- Use “Wet Floor” signs when cleaning and mopping.
- Consider the difficulties the elderly and the young may encounter.
- Fix problems now. Financial difficulty is not a legal defence.

This material is for information purposes only. It is not intended to give specific legal or risk management advice nor are any suggestions, checklists or action plans intended to include or address all possible risk management exposures or solutions.