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Safety of floors - Slip resistance and cleaning >>

Fortunately, slipping problems on warehouse floors are relatively unusual. However, when they do occur, these incidents can result in serious injuries and loss of work time. The Health and Safety Executive statistics show that Trips, Slips and Falls represent a significant proportion of all reportable accidents.

There is a whole science dedicated to understanding the causes and avoidance of slipping incidents but I am not intending to make things too complicated here and will instead attempt to answer some frequently asked questions.

What makes a floor slippery?

Almost invariably contaminants – either dry or wet. Floors are inherently smooth and it often believed that this smoothness is the cause of the problem. Generally it is not.

The usual dry contaminant is the dust that arises from normal work in the warehouse. This is normal atmospheric dust together with particles from truck tyres and packaging.

In warehouses, wet contaminants are unusual and are confined to spillages and breakages of stock. There can however be problems around loading docks and doors where rain blows in or is carried in on truck wheels.

How floors are best kept clean?

Spillages obviously need to be mopped up as soon as possible. General dust should be dealt with by an established regime which involves removing the dust. This might sound obvious but conventional sweeping i.e. with a broom is largely ineffective as much of the dust is raised into the air only to settle back to the floor later. Vacuum sweepers or scrubber dryers are the tools to use. These come in all sizes and the scrubber dryers are very effective in removing dust both loose and ingrained. Suppliers of this equipment can be found in the advertisement in this journal and on the web.

Care should be taken with brush selection for scrubber dryers as they can be over aggressive and can damage even the hardest of concrete floors.

Can floors be made less smooth?

As stated earlier, it should not be necessary except perhaps in areas that get wet. Acid etching does get suggested but be wary because this process removes the very fine particles of cement from the surface to expose the fine aggregate giving a fine sand paper type of finish. The resulting roughened surface is more difficult to clean and the slipping problem can be made worse. If the etching is too deep, then the floor surface will be opened up too much causing it to



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wear.

The best approach for wet areas is to use a resin overlay that includes an aggregate. These give a texture that will reduce slipping but which can still be cleaned without too much difficulty. They tend to wear more quickly than the concrete - but then there is no perfect solution to every problem! Next Edition: Cracks in floors – a cause for concern?

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