

### **Can You Afford to Slip Up?**

Slips, trips and falls still represents the largest number of incidents in the UK every year. When a slip, trip or fall occurs the chances of it resulting in a broken bone are approximately 95%

In February 2014 there was a milestone change in the way companies are fined in relation to breaches of health and safety which will apply to any case that is brought to court. Now fines can be administered in relation to the seriousness of the incident and the size, profit, turnover of the organisation in which the incident took place.

When reviewing a case, the court will take into account how processes, installations and systems comply with minimum industry standards and what lessons learned actions and investigations were put into place with regards to any similar or previous incidents.

This new regulation has now levelled the playing field between the large and small employer. Historically incidents of slips, trips and falls that were brought to court for examination and eventually sentencing seldom exceeded £5000.

The fines did not take into account the size of an organisation so whereas for a small company a £5000 fine could have a considerable effect for the larger organisations could be easily absorbed.

The change to the sentencing means that fines for the same incident can be far greater than before for larger organisations. The scale demonstrates that a company with a turnover of over £50m per annum could be fined up to £10m.

To reinforce the fact that this is not just a threat in a recent ongoing case with Thames Water the court of appeal has stated the fine could equal up to 100% of the company's pre-tax profit which is more than £100m

Is occupational and health and safety training enough? Companies can show good due diligence if they are able to prove they have a program of regular and relevant safety training, however the demographic of the workplace is changing.

Industry figures show the cleaning sector is one of the highest employers of migrant labour and furthermore the risks of the migrant labour having an unforeseen accident have also increased. The reasons for this tend to be socioeconomic, many migrant workers have grown up in an environment where a safety culture as we know it in the UK is not prevalent.

So with the risk and the penalties increasing safety innovation should always be at the forefront of any cleaning business or enterprise.

## So Where Does the Real Risk Lie?

It is not just the wet floor where the hazard is, many environments by their very nature are made more slippery through the day to day activities that surround them.

To further complicate the issue substances that promote slips, trips and falls can be walked from one area into another - where people may be unaware of the impending added hazard.

Typical examples of this can be found across petrol filling stations, oil storage depot site offices or the ingress and egress areas of kitchens and canteens.



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Poor daily housekeeping and spill management can make both the petrol filling station forecourt and the shop entrance and exit very slippery. A hazard that both the staff and customers are frequently exposed to.



One UK local authority with responsibility for 450 kitchens and 1500 workers reported 317 slipping accidents in 4 years. In 2014 RIDDOR recorded 7682 specific injuries related to slips and trips 3 of them fatal.



Slips trips and falls are the cause of 20% of all injuries in the Motor Vehicle and Fleet Repair environment. Insurers AVIVA stated that over 2000 incidents per year are reported to the HSE and local authorities from workshops alone.

## What Can Be Done to Help Minimise the Risk?

So if you are working in an environment where fats, oils, grease or petrol, diesel and other lubricants are often spilt or accumulate in an almost invisible film on the surface of the floor what can you do?

The answer could be in what you use as a cleaning agent and how it works.

We all know water cannot clean effectively so we add a chemical detergent. The surfactants it contains are made of molecules that have two different ends. One end is strongly attracted to water and the other to dirt and grease. However, like any chemical reaction there is a limit to how much dirt and grease that can be picked up at any time – and often it is not all of it.

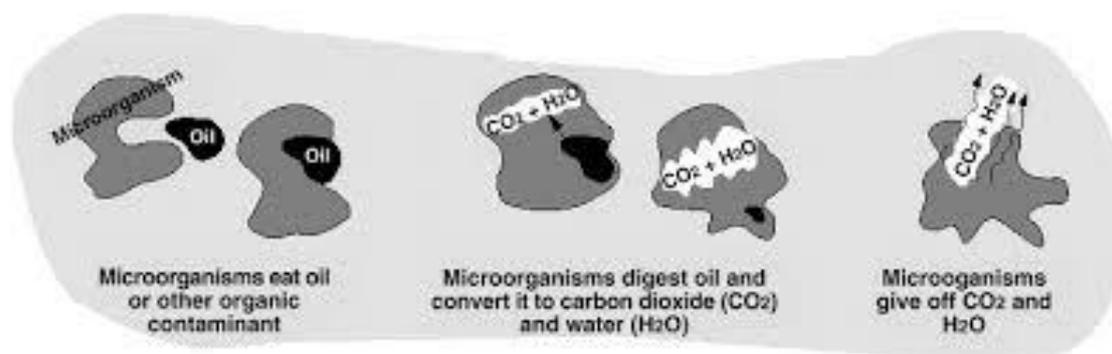
Surfactants aren't the only thing in detergents if you look at the ingredients on a typical detergent bottle and you'll see lots of other chemicals too. – many of which are harmful to both the user and the environment.

Biological detergents contain active chemicals called enzymes, which help to break up and remove food and other deposits. The main enzymes are proteases (which break up proteins), lipases (which break up fats), and amylases (which attack starch) - however enzymes have a limited capacity and time span in which they can operate.

Bio remedial cleaning agents on the other hand bring a new dimension to cleaning surfaces especially where the main source of contamination is derived from hydrocarbon, which covers the range incorporating cooking oil and grease all the way through to oil and petrol, - and yes everything in the hydrocarbon range is slippery and does not mix with water.

## How Do Bio Remedial Cleaning Products Work?

Bio remediation is a naturally occurring process that is happening all around us every day. At its core are harmless bacteria who actively ingest and break down fats, oil, grease, petrol and lubricants leaving behind only water and inert gas.



Bio remediation was traditionally used for attacking major oil spills and leaks but now it can be incorporated into daily cleaning products.

### **So What Are the Advantages of Bio Remedial Cleaning Products?**

The advantages of bio remedial cleaning products are numerous and have benefits for not only the user but also the environment as a whole.

In terms of cleaning hydrocarbons off floors and surfaces bio remedial cleaning products are not limited by a chemical properties or a fixed enzyme content. The bacteria will ingest and remove all the hydrocarbon and will multiply to eat more hydrocarbon until it is all gone – and the floor is returned to its normal non slip design status and of course clean.

Once the dirt and hydrocarbon food source has been removed from the cleaned surface the bacteria then perish as their food source has been removed. The bacteria will however continue to bio remediate the dirty cleaning water and beyond!

Once the waste cleaning water has been poured into the designated mop sink or disposal point the bacteria will continue to bio remediate any fats, oils and grease in the drainage system, preventing blockages and reducing bad odours. In fact, regular cleaning with bio remedial agents will build up a harmless biomass in the drainage system which will ingest any fats and oils that incidentally enter the drains through other activities such as dishwashing.

### **Summary**

We all have a duty of care to our employees to keep them safe and we all have a social responsibility to protect our environment as well.

At GW Environmental Consulting we have developed a range of products that can be applied directly or integrated into everyday cleaning activities to help reduce the risk of slips and trips in some of the more difficult working environments where hydrocarbons are widely used and spilled.

Regular cleaning with products containing the right micro-organisms to degrade the fats, oil and grease is the perfectly natural way to treat wastewater and help keep domestic pipes and drains flowing.

For more information or if you would like to arrange for a demonstration of our products, please do not hesitate to contact Graeme Warnell at [info@gwenvironmentalconsulting.com](mailto:info@gwenvironmentalconsulting.com) or visit our web site at [www.gwenvironmentalconsulting.com](http://www.gwenvironmentalconsulting.com)

GW Environmental Consulting - Our concern is the environment. Our passion is helping you protect it for the future

