

News release

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NORTH WEST CONTACT CENTRES AND THE HSE TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT COSTLY SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS

Slips, trips and falls by staff in contact centres across the North West are costing the industry dearly. Now industry leaders have come together with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to draw up new guidance to make contact centres safer.

Contact Centres are one of the fastest growing industries, with the North West having the highest concentration of them in the country, employing in excess of 68,000 people.

Slips, trips and fall are the most common cause of major injuries, such as fractures, in the workplaces, causing human suffering, loss to businesses through time off and a cost to the health service.

The new guidance was launched today (Tuesday 8 May) at the BT Call Centre in Warrington by HSE Regional Director David Ashton, Lee Davies from the Communication Workers Union and Ruth Hudson from BT and Frances Molloy from health@work.

The North West Contact Centre Project brought together contact centres, health and safety experts, local authorities and union representatives and has now produced the new guidance on how slips, trips and falls can be avoided in the workplace.

The project was born out of a joint desire to improve the working environment for staff in contact centres, which in turn would reduce sickness absence, improve staff retention and lead to increased productivity.

A study of slips, trips and falls in contact centres highlighted that:

- Older people, particularly women, are often injured more severely;
- Shift patterns led to large numbers of people moving around at the same time, heightening the danger;
- Spillages in kitchens / by water coolers are a slip danger if not cleared up quickly;
- Trailing computer / telephone wires were a trip hazard;

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- Personal belongings left around desks could lead to falls; and
- The work of contractors on site needed to be supervised closely to avoid danger

HSE Regional Director David Ashton said:

“Slips, trips and falls on the level are the most common cause of major injuries in workplaces. Contact Centres are a big growth employment area in the North West and we have been working closely on practical guidance to manage risks sensibly.

“The guidance has been drawn up by representative of the industry, the HSE, local authorities, trade unions and other experts to try and reduce the number of accidents which can cost the industry dearly.

“The cleaning of spillages and routine cleaning of floors is one of the areas highlighted. Mopping up after spillages can leave a thin layer of cleaning solution on the floor which can take over five minutes to dry and can result in very slippery conditions.

“Measures needed to reduce slips, trips and fall are often simple and low cost, but their introduction will bring significant reductions in reducing both human suffering and loss.”

The new slips, trips and falls guidance suggests:

- Avoidance of trailing cables by providing cable covers or through integral desk design;
- Provision of adequate storage areas for personal articles;
- Slip-resistant floors should be installed in areas that are likely to become wet;
- Surfaces in kitchens and food serving areas should be suitable and kept clean, with spills cleaned up quickly and floors allowed to dry completely before pedestrians are allowed to walk on them.

Contact centres from across the North West have been closely involved in the project including the BT Warrington Customer Contact Centre. Barclays Bank plc, Gadbrook Park Contact Centre, **Northwich**, Argos Retail Group, **Widnes**, CAPITA TV Licensing, **Darwen**, **Cumbria** Constabulary and Enterprise PLC, **Speke**.

Frances Molloy - Director of [Health@work](#) said:

“This guide has been prepared in consultation with the HSE, local authority officers, trade union officials and sector representatives as part of the work undertaken in the Northwest Contact Centres Project. Adopting an inclusive approach helped in developing agreed standards with the industry to produce best practice guidance, which will contribute to reducing workplace ill -health.”

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Lee Davies of the Liverpool branch of the Clerical Workers Union, who was closely involved in the project said:

“This guide demonstrates good practice in the industry.”

**Issued on behalf of Health and Safety Executive by the
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