

Preventing falls in public places

**Challenge and
opportunity
for local government**

In 2005 the Victorian Department of Human Services funded the National Ageing Research Institute to review and recommend a set of falls prevention resources for general use which will be available from the department's Aged Care website: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/agedcare>.

This manual was identified as one of a small handful of resources addressing falls in public places and although produced in 1996 was deemed to be a relevant and appropriate resource for inclusion on the department's website. As the document was no longer in print permission was sought to publish the document on the website.

The department would like to thank North Coast Health Promotion for allowing us to publish this document on this website.

The resource was produced by *Stay on Your Feet* North Coast Health Promotion, Lismore NSW, 1996

Note: Some graphic work was lost in the conversion of this document (originally a Pagemaker document).

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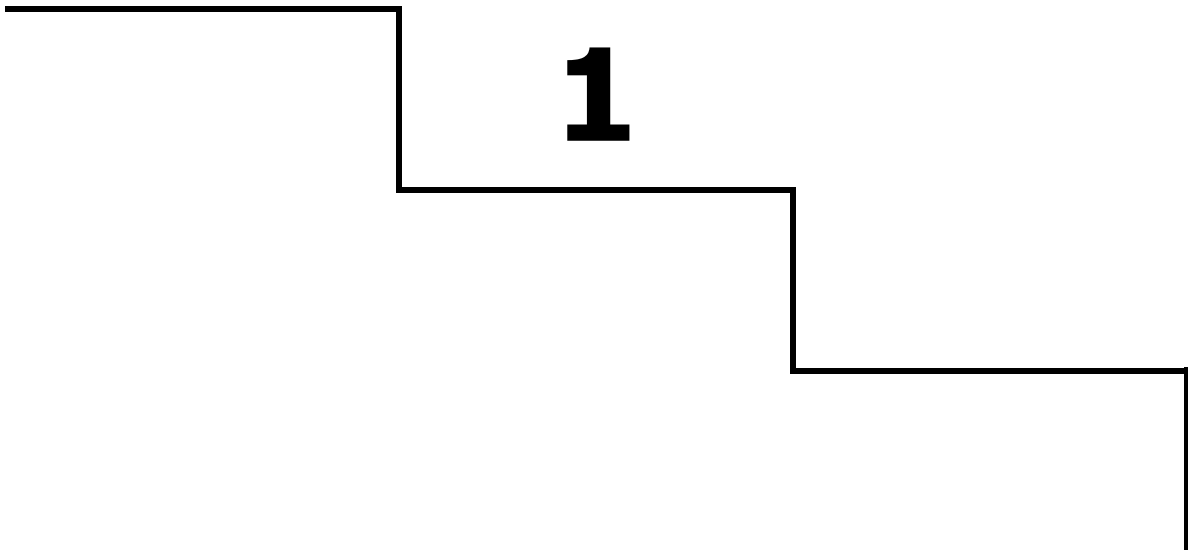
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INTRODUCTION



Introduction

Injury is an important public health concern throughout the world. In Australia, the reduction of injury has been adopted as a major goal at national and state levels.

Injury to older people caused by falling is a substantial contributor to the total injury toll. Falls result in a cost to the Australian public health system of about \$2.5 billion annually. In NSW, hospital costs alone amounted to \$129 million in 1992/93. In addition, there are indirect costs such as emergency attention at the time of a fall and increased use of community services such as Home Care and Meals on Wheels following a fall.

This situation is expected to worsen in line with the increasing number and proportion of older people in the population.

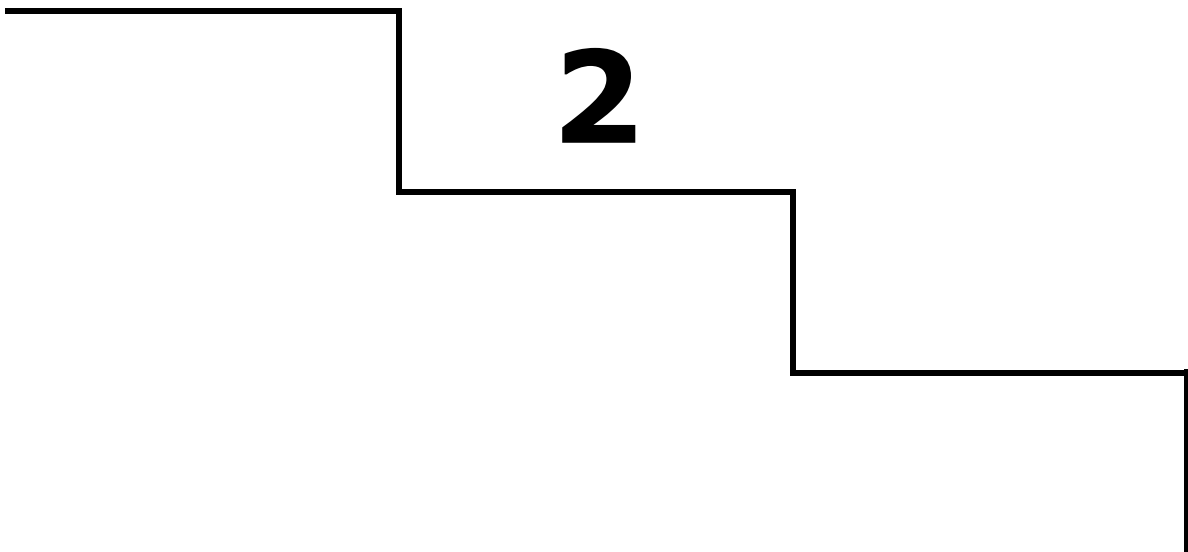
In recent years, a number of public health and health promotion programs have been set up throughout Australia to address the problem. The most successful programs are those involving a range of sectors: not only the health sector, but also housing, transport, local government, the fitness industry and older people and their organisations.

Falls in public places account for about 25% of all falls by older people and so the contribution and cooperation of local government is vital to the success of the aim of reducing falls by older members of the community.

This document seeks to assist local government to take up the challenge and opportunity of reducing falls in the public environment. Although it is a generic document, the various departments within local government, such as Engineering, Works, Parks and Gardens, Health and Building, should each find it useful in assisting them to contribute to the overall aim of reducing falls in their community.

The document examines how falls hazards may be recognised, removed or reduced; it suggests policies which might be developed and activities and strategies which councils might employ; and it looks at ways in which falls prevention measures might be sustained so that the benefits of work done now continue on into the future.

BACKGROUND



Local government and falls prevention

Local government is particularly well-placed to play a major role in falls prevention.

Councils are only too well aware of the mounting costs of public liability insurance, due largely to an increasing number of claims. At the present time, falls and falls-related injuries are responsible for 25-27% of public liability claims on local government. There is every reason to expect this increase to continue. Not only does Australia have an increasing older population, the people most likely to fall, but also a greater community awareness of personal rights and public responsibilities and an increasingly litigious climate.

However, large numbers of falls in public places can be prevented, and prevention is often simple and not necessarily expensive.

There is no doubt that falls prevention can be cost-effective for local government.

Case Study 1

Lismore City Council late in 1995 modified the covers of 150 water service boxes that were found to be slippery and had caused falls. The modification involved the application of a durable, very thin, non-slip material colour-matched to the original surface. Each modification cost under \$20 which compares well with the average cost of a public liability claim of \$2,538 (The average for over-excess claims is \$ 16,400).

(Statewide Newsletter 1/95)

What can local government do ?

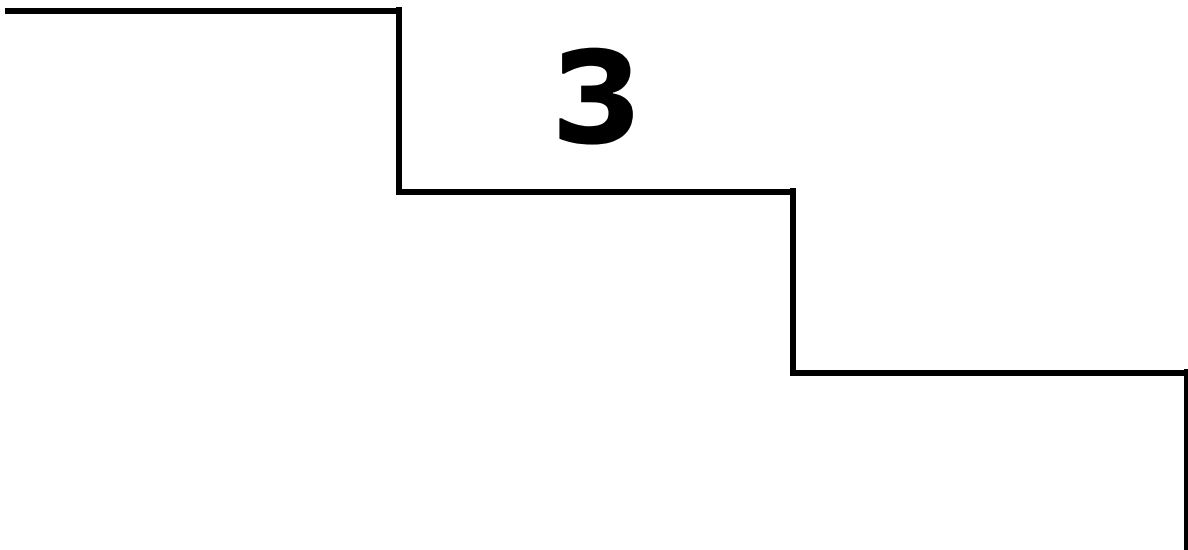
In order to create a safer public environment, councils need to consider a sequence beginning with an **understanding** of the problem, moving on to **actions** aimed at improving the existing situation and then taking steps to ensure the **sustainability** of those improvements.

Both action and sustainability aspects are vital to the long-term success of any injury prevention program.

Suggestions follow for each aspect. These suggestions are not comprehensive nor do they presume to tell local government what to do. Rather, it is hoped they will assist local government when considering this important issue of how to make public places safer for older citizens.

Making the existing public environment safer involves first *understanding the problem* of falls and then acting to remedy the situation. In order to remedy, it is necessary to *recognise, remove* and/or *reduce* environmental hazards.

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM



Falls in public places

On average, one in three people over the age of 65 will fall at least once in any year and the majority, 50% or more, will fall at home. The likelihood of a fall at home increases with increasing age.

Some 25% of falls by older people take place in the public environment. Of these, most will be by people who are younger and more active than the majority who fall at home. They are more likely to be people in the 55-70 age group.

Although falls prevention in public places focuses on reducing hazards for older people, all hazard reduction will have a beneficial flow-on effect to other age groups also. It is not, of course, only older people who fall or fall in public places. Falling is also the highest cause of injury to children and a significant cause of injury to adults. It can have grave consequences for pregnant women. As a general rule, however, older people fall more often, sustain more serious injuries as a result and suffer more severely impaired quality of life.

Why do people fall ?

People do not fall because of their age. Older people tend to fall more often because of a range of problems that frequently come with increasing age, problems such as arthritis, Parkinson's disease, poor balance and mobility, muscle weakness and joint inflexibility, eyesight difficulties and foot problems. These factors are all more significant for falling than age itself and all are amenable to some degree of improvement or at least improved maintenance.

Essentially, a fall is the result of a loss of balance from which a person is unable to recover and is usually brought about by a combination of factors. For example, although the immediate cause may be that the person tripped on a broken portion of footpath, additional complicating factors may be that poor eyesight prevented them from seeing the break, they were walking unsteadily because of poor balance, shuffling made them more likely to trip and slow reaction time prevented them from recovering in time or grabbing onto something to break the fall.

The most frequent reason for a fall is the combination of health related problems affecting balance abilities and an environmental hazard.

Most falls occur on the same level and result from a trip or a slip. Logically, there must be something to trip or slip on. Even people with a high "propensity to fall" are unlikely to do so unless provided with an "opportunity to fall" by way of an environmental hazard.

Particular problems for older people

Older people face a number of disadvantages in the public environment. Normal ageing brings changes which need to be more widely understood in order to make the environment safer. Of particular importance are changes to eyesight, balance, gait and reaction time.

Eyesight changes involve:

- A gradual loss of contrast sensitivity, so that many environmental hazards become less visible, as for older eyes they tend to disappear into the background.

Example:

A step in a pathway will be less visible if it is of the same material/colour as the path - it needs to be differentiated by a change in colour or material or by a contrasting marker strip on the leading edge.

- Less sensitivity in depth perception, causing difficulty in judging height and distance.

Example:

Stairways or sets of steps are of special concern - especially when descending, people may have trouble judging step depth

unless there is a contrasting strip to mark the leading edge of each step.

- Less light reaching the retina, causing older eyes to have greater difficulty in poor light.

Example:

Shaded areas or those that are dim in bad weather should have stronger than usual artificial light - this applies most particularly to stairwells.

- Less tolerance of glare, so older people are more likely to be temporarily blinded by sudden or harsh light.

Example:

Buildings, hallways and stairwells used by older people need to be well lit but light fittings should be covered to reduce glare - bare light globes of high wattage are not a good choice, especially in transitional areas.

- A slower response to changes in light meaning that older people can be disoriented whilst their eyes adjust from light to dark and vice versa.

Example:

Buildings which have a transitional area, a foyer for instance, between inside and outside will allow time for older eyes to respond to the change in light conditions.

- Less acute vision, so that objects can appear blurred and need magnification.

Example:

Signage should not only stand clear of background, but older people prefer somewhat larger signs, with larger print and with good contrast between print and background.

Balance mechanisms deteriorate as people grow older and as a result, older people move more cautiously. Some experience dizziness, and this, together with fear of falling and eyesight difficulties, greatly increases the likelihood of falling.

Example:

A hand-grip convenient to any change in level or where there is a potential hazard is a wise precaution. A grab-rail is essential on stairways but will be helpful if only two or three steps are involved. The entrances to many buildings are potentially hazardous for older people in inclement weather and hand-holds here are appreciated.

Gait changes (changes in walking pattern) mean not only that older people move more slowly but also that many adopt a shuffling gait in which the feet are not picked up as high and tripping thus becomes more probable. Very small, seemingly innocuous impediments can become hazardous in this scenario - in fact, it seems that the smaller the hazard, the more dangerous it is likely to be, particularly when combined with an eyesight problem.

Example:

Great care needs to be taken when installing or maintaining service covers on footpaths, or when replacing sections of footpath - if the work is not level there will be a problem.

Reaction time is usually slower for older people so that they often take longer to size up and react to a situation. Thus they have less time to react appropriately and also less time to correct an inappropriate reaction. They become particularly vulnerable in busy, crowded situations and most at risk if in danger of collision.

Example:

Some older pedestrians report that they are terrified if faced by cyclists, joggers or skateboarders using the same footpath, terrified of a collision, of being knocked down or of falling as they attempt to avoid a collision. Unrestrained dogs are also of great concern, not only those roaming free but those on leads only partially-controlled or boisterous.

Case Study 2

Path incident (Northern Star newspaper article)

I am writing about an incident on the footpath in River St, Ballina, last week. While I was walking on the footpath near St George Bank I had to avoid an uneven piece of footpath so I veered left half a step when a young cyclist brushed past me and I was lucky to be able to maintain my balance as I use a quad stick. This type of behaviour by cyclists, both young and old, seems on Ballina footpaths to be becoming more prevalent. I don't mind them walking with their bikes, but please, no riding.
Clive R. Scott, Ballina

Muscle weakness, joint inflexibility and poor mobility are common to many older people, particularly the very old and frail. Each of these contributes to an inherent possibility of falling, exacerbated in the presence of a hazard. These conditions add to the time taken by older people to react to a dangerous situation. As well, they mean that a lot less force is required to upset the equilibrium of an older person - so here again, cyclists, skateboarders, joggers and dogs are of concern.

Example:

Because of poor mobility, crossing the road is anxiety-ridden for many - two areas of complaint are that traffic lights need to be set on a longer "Walk" interval and that pedestrian islands should be provided on wide roads.

There is need for greater awareness of falls prevention issues by designers and builders as well as by administrators and officials having a duty of care to the public in all its variety.

Case Study 3

In 1991, an older couple (76 and 89) both fell on the front steps of Parliament House, Canberra. One broke her arm, ankle and bones in her foot, the other was bruised and injured his back. Parliamentary officials wrote denying responsibility, on the grounds that the couple “had mistaken the steps for a ramp”. The steps in question are an expanse of white marble that must appear as a blur to anyone with a visual disability.

The simple answer

The health sector is encouraging and educating older people to have their eyes checked; exercise to improve balance, mobility and gait; take care with medications; wear safer shoes, plus a host of other strategies aimed at reducing falls. These strategies all address older people’s “propensity to fall” and are by no means a simple answer.

Another falls prevention strategy is to encourage older people to make their homes and gardens safer and so reduce the domestic “opportunity to fall”. This is a simple and effective strategy, in that removing hazards is usually a once-only measure, not requiring people to change established habits.

In those situations where councils have direct authority and responsibility, they are also able to adopt a once-only strategy of removing hazards and so cut down the “opportunity to fall”. This is a simple answer leading directly to fewer falls. It is also a strategy which can show positive results in a short time and for large numbers of people. This would seem to be the case in reducing falls hazards

relating to footpaths, ramps, public open spaces and roads. It would also be feasible with those buildings and facilities owned by councils.

The position is obviously not so clear-cut for departments such as Health and Building which cannot always require remedial work to be done by owners and developers. Here the council role may be educative, with falls prevention suggestions being attached to development applications.

Falls prevention is not necessarily a front-of-mind issue for developers and architects. Increasingly the owners and occupiers of commercial premises need to give it more thought. However it is clearly in their own self-interest to do so: not only do they run the risk of being sued if their premises are unsafe, but there is considerable business to be lost and gained.

The aim for councils should be to recognise, remove or reduce environmental hazards and encourage others to do the same.

Case Study 4

A woman aged over 60 years plus reported visiting a new suburban shopping centre in Sydney. "It looked very glamorous but it was like walking onto a sea of glass. I've never been back again." The loss of one customer may not amount to a huge loss but this woman had a wide circle of friends and she enjoyed a regular weekly outing of shopping and lunching with her two daughters, both of whom had young families. Taking their custom elsewhere because of her safety concerns meant a considerable loss to one centre and gain to another.

Councils can also motivate by offering incentives: an example is Kempsey Shire Council, which waives fees on building applications which are designed with safety in mind. Councils are also in a position to reward those who make the effort to provide or improve access and safety by giving recognition in the form of awards or favourable mention in council newsletters.

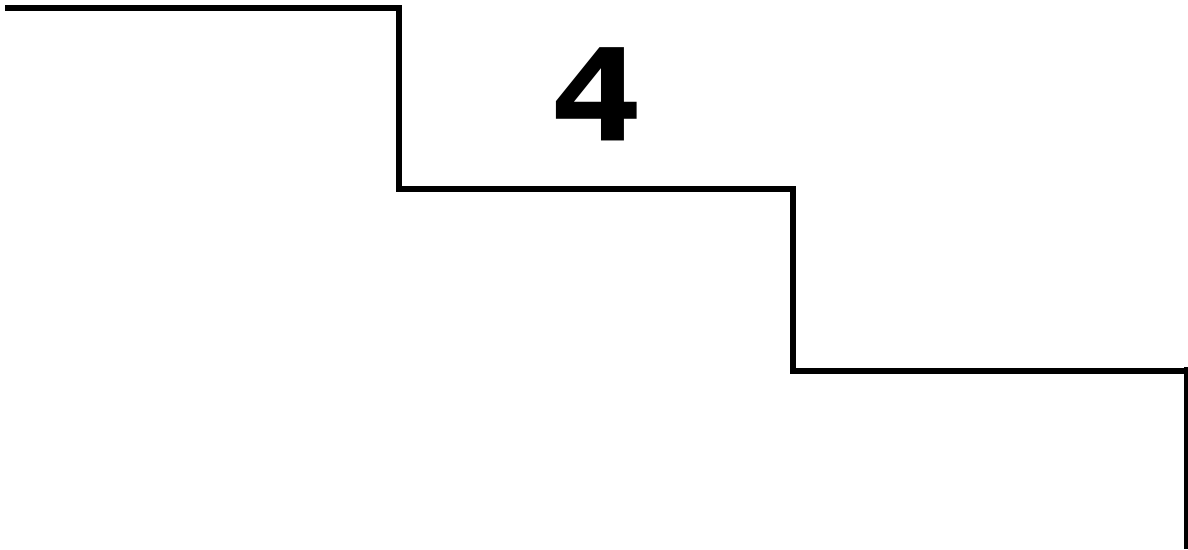
Two checklists are included in this document to assist in identifying falls prevention opportunities in public places.

Appendices:

“A” looks at footpaths, steps and stairs, ramps and roadways and is intended for use by staff of engineering, parks and gardens and planning departments for instance.

“B” looks at the interior environment of shopping centres, malls, arcades and supermarkets and could form the basis of suggestions from health and building departments to owners, builders and developers.

TAKING ACTION TO REMEDY FALL HAZARDS



Taking action to remedy fall hazards

Recognise

Remove

Reduce

Recognising fall hazards

Because of problems with eyesight, balance, gait and reaction time, the public environment becomes more hazardous with age and hazards themselves change their character. It is vital to understand this, particularly in relation to eyesight and walking surfaces. Where younger eyes will see a small step in the paving, older eyes will not and it becomes a fall hazard. For older eyes, such small changes in level need to be clearly signalled by a change in paving material or colour or by a contrasting edge-strip to the step.

It is well to keep in mind that hazards also change with weather conditions. A walking surface which is safe enough when dry may become dangerously slippery in rain.

Recognising falls hazards is easier with community participation, especially by older people themselves.

An active **Access Committee** can be a great asset to councils in identifying fall hazards since many of the problems relating to access relate to older people also.

A note on Access and Safety Committees is included later under the heading "Sustainability".

Following practices first established in Scandinavia where the concept of "safe communities" was born, it is now quite common in Australia for community Safety Walks to be undertaken in order to identify, list and prioritise hazards in the public environment. These are sometimes undertaken at the instigation of an Access Committee or a group such as the Royal Blind Society or Senior Citizens' organisations. In the area of falls prevention, such walks are popular and effective, even more so when elected councillors or council staff participate and when there is a commitment to take action on the recommendations. It is as well to conduct safety walks in varying weather conditions to be sure of picking up those hazards that are present only on rainy days.

Appendices:

A and B give checklists to what to look for in identifying falls hazards in public places. See also AS/NZS 3661.2:1994

Removing fall hazards

Complete removal of a hazard must be the first preference wherever possible.

Councils are well aware of their legal obligation to remove a hazard once it has been brought to their attention. It is probably wise for councils to be pro-active in this regard and remove hazards before they are notified. Some councils establish a works plan for such remedial work and budget for it each year.

Councils are in a position to monitor the work of others.

Example:

Construction sites, to ensure that building materials are confined to the site and not permitted to spread across adjoining footpaths. Materials such as gravel constitute a serious falls hazard when they stray onto walking surfaces.

Example:

Reconstruction work following laying of new pipes or gaslines for instance. New hazards are often created when footpaths are poorly reconstructed following such work, possibly by other services which do not have the same expertise or understanding of public safety.

Financial constraints naturally restrict the amount of remedial work councils are able to do, but it is important to keep in mind that hazardous footpaths are implicated in more fall events than any other public site. It would therefore seem appropriate to concentrate on removing footpath hazards as a first priority.

Example:

Remove and replace pavers or paving blocks that have moved out of alignment; repair cracked, broken or potholed pavements; remove or relocate obstructions or inappropriately placed street furniture.

Reducing fall hazards

In cases where it is either not possible or not feasible to remove a hazard entirely, some reduction of the hazard is usually possible. Improvement may be achieved through a reduction in the quantity of a particular hazard or a reduction in severity.

Example:

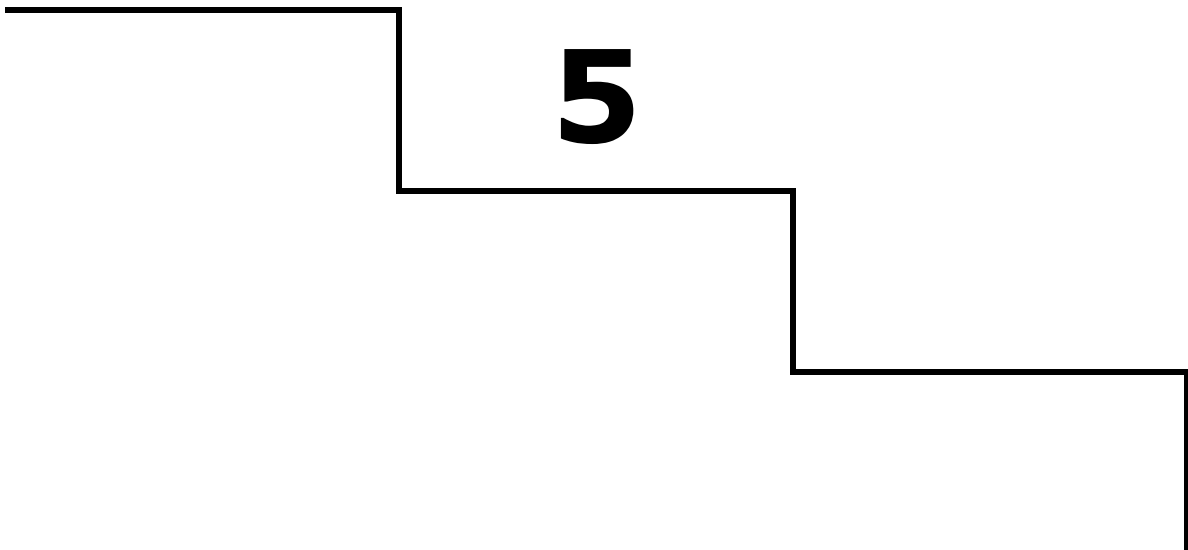
The gravel shoulders of many roads in country towns are a falls hazard but paving them all may well be too costly. However, it would be a useful falls prevention measure to

pave those which older people use frequently, close to shops or social and sports clubs for example.

Example:

A public building, the library for instance, may have a slippery tiled floor, reconstruction of which would be prohibitively expensive. The severity of the hazard could be reduced by a non-slip liquid coating and the improvement maintained by correct cleaning procedures.

ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY



Ensuring sustainability

“Sustainability” refers to the ability to control the problem of falls into the future.

There are various ways of achieving this, among them being:

- Making permanent environmental changes
- Making design changes
- Making policy changes
- Institutionalisation.

Permanent environmental changes

See "Removing fall hazards" (Page 17)

Making design changes

It is self-evident that the most effective policy regarding falls hazards is not to create them in the first place. It follows that the planning and design stage of new work is the best and cheapest entry-point for removing hazards. Where a culture of safety and an understanding of falls hazards exists within the organisation, this can be accomplished relatively easily, at least in the short term. Sustainability will be tenuous, however, should circumstances or personnel alter, and for this reason, it would seem wise to incorporate safe design principles into a planning and design policy document. This would apply not only to building work and engineering works, but also to landscaping where the selection of materials and botanical elements can be crucial.

Making policy changes

Local government appears to have an opportunity for falls prevention policy within each of its service, regulatory and administrative functions.

Local government may also choose to develop an overall safety policy with goals incorporated into management plans. Such a policy would attest to a commitment to improving community life in every respect and meeting demonstrated community needs.

Since councils are required to make all new buildings "access friendly" and since access policies are already in place, it would seem a natural progression to adopt a safety policy ensuring that all new buildings are also "falls safe". Such a policy could stand alone, or in many cases it would be feasible to develop an access and safety policy by incorporating falls prevention into current access policies.

Appendices:

"F" gives an example of an Access policy.

"G" gives an example of a Falls prevention policy.

In addition, the various council departments might develop their own policies, with appropriate guidelines. Such guidelines would be helpful for building inspectors and engineers, as well as parks and gardens staff, for instance.

Where appropriate, council committees might include safety policy as part of their charter. Committees such as traffic and civic design seem particularly appropriate.

In developing falls prevention policies, valuable information is contained in: AS/NZS 3661.2 : Guide to the reduction of slip hazards. AS/NZS 1428.1 : Design for access and mobility. Technical Bulletin 17. Access to Public Spaces for Disabled People. (Department of Environment and Planning 1985).

If policies and practices aimed to do no more than prevent slips and trips on pedestrian surfaces, the number of falls would be significantly reduced.

Institutionalisation

This term refers to the achievement of long-term viability through a process in which “practices, relationships and values become permanently entrenched in individuals, groups, organisations and the community at large” (Lefebvre, 1990).

If falls prevention awareness is entrenched only among interested individuals, there will be a fading of effect over time as those individuals move on. Entrenching it within the organisation is a more effective long-term strategy.

Institutionalisation within local government can be achieved by a range of measures, including:

- Addition of falls prevention principles to the Council Charter; eg. Item 1, “to provide ...adequate, equitable, appropriate and safe services and facilities”.
- Inclusion of falls prevention principles among the service functions of council.
- Establishment of either an Access Committee or an Access and Safety Committee.
- Adoption of falls prevention policies.
- Development of workforce guidelines/practices.
- Workforce training.
- Inclusion of guidelines in orientation of new employees.

- Information and advice (eg. advice to builders given out with D.A. approvals).
- Community participation on council committees (eg. Access, Traffic, Design).
- Supportive attitude from council staff and elected councillors (eg. elected councillor to be a member of access and safety committees).
- Supportive infrastructure, eg. staff positions such as a risk manager covering safety issues and an inspector policing dogs, skateboards etc under the relevant council by-laws; keeping a falls register and an easy well-publicised method for public reporting both of hazards and falls or near-falls.

Appendices:

"C", "D" and "E" show sample forms for reporting hazards, falls incidents and requesting maintenance work.

Access and Safety Committees

Many Access Committees have broadened their scope to look at the problems of people using walking aids as well as wheelchairs and also people with a vision impairment. Some Committees have also become Access and Safety Committees, with a concern for injury prevention. It would seem appropriate for councils to invite one or two older people onto such Committees so that falls prevention is permanently on the agenda. Organisations such as the Combined Pensioners' and Superannuants' Federation or the Older Women's Network have a strong interest in falls prevention and would no doubt provide a representative.

Not all Local Government Areas (LGA) have an Access Committee, a Safety Committee or a combination of the two. There is also wide variation between Committees, both in composition and function. The following guidelines have been developed through consultation,

discussion and observation of several Committees which function effectively.

Suggested composition of the committee

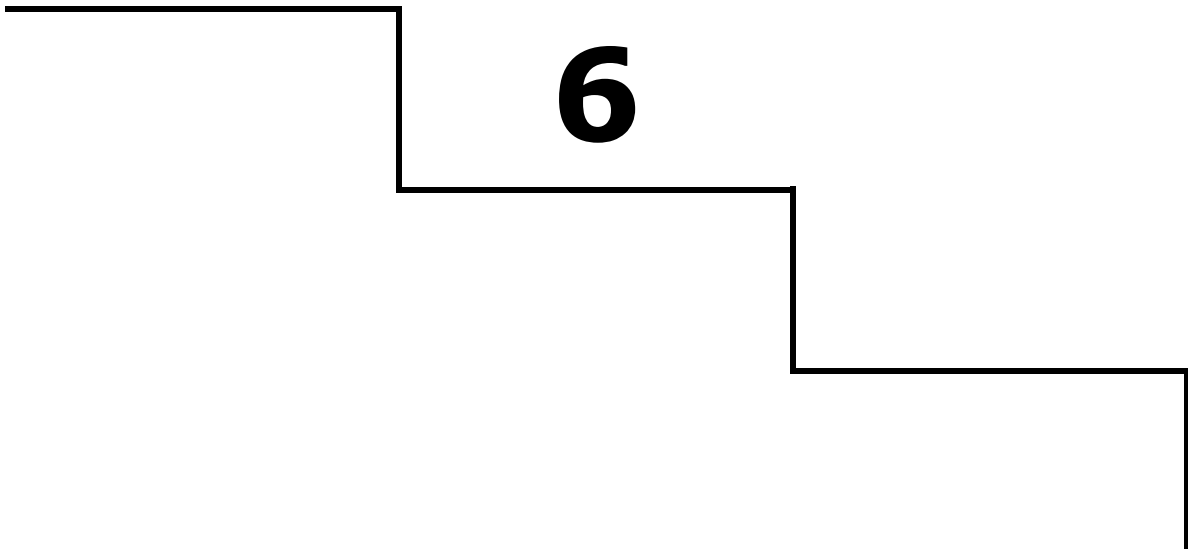
- At least one councillor
- Council's risk manager or a building inspector
- Engineer
- Town Planner
- Royal Blind Society representative
- Older people's representative
- Person using a wheelchair
- Person using a walking frame or stick
- Occupational Therapist
- Committee should also be able to co-opt outside experts as required.

Suggested functions of the committee

- To advise on all aspects of access and safety within the LGA.
- To raise awareness of these issues through advocacy, education and training.
- To scrutinise and advise on building applications before approval (a function best delegated to staff member in order not to delay the process).
- To scrutinise and advise on any council projects likely to affect access and safety.
- Examples of the range of appropriate Access Committee functions include:
 - Disseminating information re legislation, ie Disability Discrimination Act.

- Advising on traffic matters such as the location, size and design of disabled parking spaces; location of pedestrian crossings; time phasing of traffic control signals.
- Location of public telephones, provision of TTY telephones (“telephone typewriters”).
- Instituting an award for premises which provide good access and safety.
- Organising ‘safety walks’ to identify and prioritise hazards.

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APPENDIX



A

**Falls prevention
checklist for footpaths,
steps, stairs, ramps and
roads**

Checklist for footpaths, steps, stairs, ramps and roads.

FOOTPATHS

Consider

Design, choice of materials, construction, condition, obstructions and maintenance.

Design

Are paths designed as a continuous flow, with changes in level accomplished by a gradual slope or ramp where possible?

Are paths wide enough for use by people using wheelchairs and walking aids?

Are unavoidable steps visible at a distance?

Do steps have non-slip nosings and treads?

Do steps have hand-holds or grab-rails?

Are leading edges of steps marked with contrasting material or colour?

Is there provision for good drainage?

Materials

Is the surface appropriately slip-resistant? (preference should be given to brushed or textured concrete and asphalt rather than concrete blocks or clay pavers)

If blocks or pavers are selected, are they non-slip?

Is the selected material firm underfoot? (granular material such as small river stones and gravel are unsuitable)

Are nearby plantings appropriate? (need to consider final growth of trees, type of root system etc.)

Construction

Where less desirable materials have been chosen, the quality of the construction work becomes even more important.

Is the surface level?

Are blocks or pavers firmly embedded so that they do not lift or sink out of true?

Are all joints level?

Are other services within the footpath structure (eg. access hole covers) level with surface?

Where applicable, are the sides of paths highlighted? (eg. in parks to distinguish paths from garden beds)

Condition

Are paths damaged in any way? (check for cracks, pot-holes, protruding tree roots)

Are there any areas of subsidence?

Are paths safe under all conditions? (check for overhanging branches, mould and lichen caused by shade; trees which drop leaves, flowers, berries or nuts; proximity of unsuitable landscaping materials such as gravel, pebbles, broken hard nut shells)

Are paths kept free of builders' debris?

Are paths free of litter, food scraps etc? (sufficient litter bins will assist)

Obstructions

Do walkways have clear passage and clear line of sight?

Do angle-parked cars obstruct paths?

Is all street furniture appropriately placed to allow free passage?

Are sandwich-boards and sidewalk displays of goods prohibited?

If not, are they restricted in number and placement to allow free passage?

Maintenance

Is there a regular cleaning regime in place?

Are regular checks carried out to ensure freedom from temporary obstructions and hazards?

Is damage rectified immediately it is reported?

Are other services monitored for standard of work and maintenance?

STEPS AND STAIRS

Are they kept to an absolute minimum?

Are steps and stairs clearly visible in the landscape?

Is the riser-to-tread ratio at least 1:7?

Are they firm underfoot, especially on the leading edge? (check particularly edges with bricks laid on end or pavers overhanging)

Are they wide enough for two people to walk abreast?

Are they constructed of non-slip material? (eg. brushed or textured concrete)

Is there an anti-slip leading edge to each step?

Is the leading edge of each step highlighted by a contrasting material or colour?

If the edge has a painted strip, is the paint non-slip?

Are hand-holds or rails provided on both sides of steps?

Do the rails extend beyond the top and bottom of stair-run?

Can a hand be fitted right round the rails?

Are the rails securely fixed?

Are the rails a contrasting colour to the background?

Are long flights of stairs broken by a landing, preferably with seating provided?

Are steps, rails, paint etc all well maintained?

Are the steps free of overhanging branches, deep shade etc?

RAMPS

Is a ramp provided wherever possible in preference to steps?

Is the ramp clearly visible?

Is the incline 1:14 or less?

Is the ramp wide enough for two people to walk abreast?

Is it constructed of non-slip material? (eg. brushed or textured concrete, asphalt)

Is the surface in good condition, level and free of cracks?

Are rails provided on both sides?

Do the rails extend beyond ramp at both ends?

Can a hand be fitted right round the rails?

Are the rails securely fixed?

Are the rails a contrasting colour to the background?

Is the ramp cleaned regularly?

Are there no obstructions, overhanging branches, falling leaves etc?

ROADWAYS

Are road shoulders sealed wherever possible?

If gravel is used on shoulders, is it regularly swept from walking surfaces?

Are traffic lights timed to allow older people sufficient time to cross?

Is there a safe median rest for older people?

Are there sufficient pedestrian crossings to accommodate the needs of older people?

Are pedestrian crossings marked with non-slip paint?

Is the paint regularly renewed?

Are pedestrian crossings highly visible, both to pedestrians and motorists?

Are pedestrian crossings situated a safe distance from street corners? (most accidents to older pedestrians from motor vehicles occur on corner crossings)

Is all signage of sufficient clarity and size for older people to read easily?

APPENDIX



B

**Falls prevention
checklist for shopping
centres, malls, arcades etc.**

Falls prevention checklist for shopping centres, malls, arcades etc.

ENTRANCE

Is it protected from the weather?

Is the area well-maintained?

If there are steps, are they clearly marked?

Is the floor surface non-slip?

Is the area well-lit?

Is the area free of clutter for ease of entry?

Are the doors self-opening?

If not, can they be left open?

Are any mats clearly visible and well secured?

STEPS, STAIRS, RAMPS

Are they protected from weather?

Are they well maintained?

Are steps clearly marked?

Are stairs closed rather than open type?

Do all treads have a non-slip front edge?

Are ramps non-slip?

Is the ramp incline 1:14 or less?

Are hand-rails provided on all stairs and ramps?

Do they run on both sides?

Do they extend at least 300 cms beyond each end?

Are they well secured?

Can they be fully gripped?

Are all steps, stairs and ramps well lit?

Do long stairways and ramps have rests at suitable intervals?

LIGHTING

Is the general level of lighting sufficient for people with impaired vision?

Are areas of particular risk (eg. stair-wells and passages) well-lit?

Are the light fittings shaded to prevent glare?

Are lights positioned to avoid reflective glare?

Are all lights functioning?

FLOOR SURFACES

Are all walking surfaces non-slip?

Are traffic pathways clearly visible and free of obstruction?

Are there no loose mats, runners, etc. on floors?

Are floors well-maintained, with no cracks, broken tiles, missing tiles, etc?

Are floors free of litter, spilled liquids and food scraps?

Are temporary hazards clearly announced? (eg. 'Caution - Wet Floor' signs)

Are temporary displays/promotions safely mounted? (eg. power cords taped down)

FURNITURE and FIXTURES

Is there sufficient seating to alleviate fatigue?

Is seating comfortable and conveniently placed?

Are litter-bins sufficient and clearly visible?

Are signs kept away from traffic pathways unless necessary?

Are there no signs protruding at head or body height?

Are signs sufficiently large and clear for people with impaired vision?

REST ROOMS

Are they clearly and frequently sign-posted?

Are they located centrally rather than hidden away?

Is only a short walk required to reach them?

Are the access doors easily managed? (eg. by a frail person or anyone using a wheelchair or walking frame)

Are the floor surfaces non-slip throughout?

Is seating provided?

Do hand-basins have non-slip mats or adhesive strips beneath them?

Do cubicles have grab-rails provided and securely fixed?

CLEANING

Is the floor cleaned at regular intervals? (eg. each 20 minutes)

Is the cleaning method unlikely to increase risk of slipping?

Is the major cleaning done with a grease-cutting or non-slip additive?

Is the floor *never ever* waxed?

Does the floor look shiny/slippy? (thus presenting a psychological hazard to many older people)

LIFTS, ESCALATORS

Are both provided?

Are lifts clearly visible and easily reached?

Are lift doors self-opening?

Do they allow plenty of time for entry and exit?

Do lifts stop with floors exactly level with shop-floor?

Do lifts start off and stop smoothly?

Are escalators clearly visible and centrally located?

Do escalators move at an appropriate speed for older people?

POLICY and PRACTICE

Does the centre management have a safety policy that includes falls prevention?

Is there an awareness of falls and understanding of falls prevention at management levels?

* Are all new staff given safety training/safety guidelines to follow?

Are safety practices encouraged/enforced throughout centre?

Do safety practices include controlling unruly/inappropriate/dangerous behaviour? (eg. skateboards)

Is the public encouraged to contribute to overall safety?

Is there a mechanism in place for this? (eg. suggestion box)

* This is particularly important so that individual staff members will take immediate action, re: spillages, food scraps, etc. rather than wait for regular cleaning "sweeps".

APPENDIX



C

Sample Hazards Report Form

With some minor changes, this is the form developed by Manly Health Promotion Unit, to whom thanks are due for permission to reproduce here.

HAZARD REPORT

1. Date
2. Exact location of hazard (include details to aid identification, such as street names, numbers, nearest corner, building names).
.....
.....
3. Type of hazard:

broken surface	slippery surface
raised surface	obstruction
depressed surface or pot-hole	inadequate lighting
tree root	overhanging branches
steps	inappropriate parking
lack of hand-hold	traffic flow/road crossing
other (please specify)	debris/litter

.....
4. Type of surface (eg. concrete, asphalt, blocks, pavers etc)
.....
5. Description of problem.....
.....
6. Reported by.....
7. Would you like to know about the action taken? Yes / No
8. If yes, would you please supply a contact address and phone number
.....
.....
9. Please return this form to.....
.....

OFFICE USE: Received by On

 Actioned by On

 Responded On

APPENDIX



D

**Sample Fall Incident
Report Form**

FALL OR NEAR-FALL REPORT FORM

1. Date of incident
2. Exact location (include details to aid identification, such as street names, numbers, nearest corner, building names)
.....
.....
3. What caused the fall or near-fall?
A hazard such as a broken foot-path, tree root, litter, slippery path?
or
Another person, such as a cyclist, jogger, skateboarder?
4. Please give details of what happened
5. Was there an injury?
6. Reported by
7. Are you the person who fell?
8. Would you like to know about the action taken? Yes / No
9. If yes, would you please supply a contact address and phone number
.....
.....
10. Please return this form to

OFFICE USE : Received by On

 Actioned by On

 Responded On

APPENDIX



E

**Sample
Maintenance Request**

CITY OF LISMORE

REQUEST FOR MAINTENANCE WORKS

NAME

COMPLAINANT'S ADDRESS

.....

LOCATION OF WORK

.....

TELEPHONE (PRIVATE) (BUSINESS)

NATURE OF COMPLAINT (Indicate by ✓)

- () ROAD SHOULDERS
- () WATERTABLES (GUTTERS)
- () BITUMEN ROAD PATCHING
- () GRAVEL ROAD
- () TREE OVERGROWTH
- () STREET SIGNS
- () OTHER

.....

.....

Date Signature

OFFICE USE ONLY

RECOMMENDED ACTION/REFER TO

.....

Date Signature

APPENDIX



F

Sample Access Policy

**Acknowledgement and thanks to
Coffs Harbour City Council and
Kempsey Shire Council for permission
to reproduce this policy.**

POLICY TITLE: Disability Access Policy

OBJECTIVE: to develop and implement strategies which ensure that the local government area becomes an accessible community to all people, regardless of their abilities/disabilities.

DEFINITION: an accessible community is one in which the transportation system, physical environment, communication systems, technological systems, political, cultural, bureaucratic, corporate, social institutions and employment practices are open and available to people with disabilities, providing them with the same opportunities, rights and responsibilities enjoyed by all other people in the community.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. To form a Disability Access Committee with the following objectives:

- a. To promote equity of access for all people with disabilities in all areas of life, including recreation and leisure, employment, transport and physical environment.
- b. To provide a forum for the discussion of access issues.
- c. To act as an advisory committee and make recommendations to other bodies to ensure that access for people with disabilities is adequately considered in all relevant planning development applications, public buildings and recreation facilities.
- d. To consult with organisations and representatives from all major disability groups to ensure consumer input on all matters affecting people with disabilities.
- e. To improve public awareness of disability issues by disseminating information about disability and giving publicity to the activities of the Access Committee.
- f. To develop guidelines for assessing access for disabled people to all public facilities and other relevant areas.
- g. To systematically survey the local government area and to document access problems and bring them to the attention of appropriate authorities and/or develop projects/suggestions to improve any problems.
- h. To explore avenues of obtaining funds to finance access projects.
- i. To develop policies on access and disability issues.

- j. To collect statistics on disability groups.
- k. To encourage the involvement of disabled people, health workers, councillors, families and carers of disabled people and other professionals and interested people to become involved in the Access Committee.

2. The local government authority shall endeavour to follow these principles:

- a) No person who lives, works in or visits the local government area shall be denied access to any local government facilities or services on the grounds of personal disability or disadvantage.
- b) All new facilities operated by local government shall be designed to be fully accessible to persons with all types of disability.
- c) Existing facilities operated by local government shall, where possible, be progressively modified to optimise their accessibility.
- d) Programs and services provided shall have operating guidelines which optimise their availability to persons experiencing disability or disadvantage and those shall be publicised.
- e) Staff shall be given the opportunity to undertake in-service training related to disability.
- f) No suitable applicant for employment shall be rejected on the basis of disability.
- g) Council shall adopt principles which facilitate the employment of people with disabilities and this policy shall be noted in employment advertising.
- h) Council shall, where possible, make available its resources to bodies in the area to assist in community education and the integration of people with disabilities into all aspects of life in the community.
- i) Council shall encourage developers to optimise the accessibility of their projects and incentive schemes to bring this about shall be investigated.
- j) All non-council bodies shall be encouraged to maximise the accessibility of their facilities, programs and services.
- k) Council shall actively enforce the relevant building regulations and requirements for the provision of access to new and existing buildings.

APPENDIX



G

**Sample
Falls Prevention Policy**

POLICY TITLE: Falls Prevention Policy

OBJECTIVE: To develop and implement strategies to ensure that the local government area becomes a fall-safe community for all people, particularly for older people who are most at risk of experiencing a fall and suffering disabling injury.

DEFINITION: A fall-safe community is one in which the physical environment is constructed/modified to be as safe as possible; the transport system follows falls prevention procedures and bureaucratic, corporate and social institutions provide the necessary infrastructure support.

POLICY STATEMENT: Council supports and will follow these principles:

- a. All people living, working and visiting the local government area are entitled to use public spaces, council facilities, programs and services without fear of falling because of some preventable environmental hazard.
- b. All people have the same entitlements, regardless of age, infirmity or disability.
- c. Council recognises that older people have particular problems in regard to hazards in the public environment because of age-related physical deficits. It recognises therefore that older people have particular needs which must be addressed.
- d. All new facilities operated by council will be designed to be as fall-safe as possible.
- e. Existing facilities operated by council will be progressively modified to make them as fall-safe as possible.
- f. Programs and services provided will have operating guidelines which optimise their fall-safety and these guidelines will be publicised.
- g. Council staff will have the opportunity to undertake in-service training in relation to falls prevention. This training will be mandatory for departmental heads.
- h. Council will make available its resources to assist in wider community awareness of the problem of falls and will encourage community education in falls prevention.
- i. Council will encourage developers to optimise the safety of their projects and will investigate incentive schemes to bring this about.
- j. Council will encourage all non-council bodies to optimise the safety of their facilities, programs and services.
- k. Council will enforce the relevant building regulations and requirements to ensure that new and existing buildings are as fall-safe as possible.

MATERIAL FOR COPYING

FOOTPATHS, STEPS, STAIRS ETC

DESIGN	Yes	No	Comments
Are paths designed as a continuous flow, with changes in level accomplished by a gradual slope or ramp where possible?			
Are paths wide enough for use by people using wheelchairs and walking aids?			
Are unavoidable steps visible at a distance?			
Do steps have non-slip nosings and treads?			
Do steps have hand-holds or grab-rails?			
Are the leading edges of steps marked with contrasting material or colour?			
Is there provision for good drainage?			

FOOTPATHS, STEPS, STAIRS ETC

MATERIALS

Is the surface appropriately slip-resistant? (preference should be given to brushed or textured concrete and asphalt rather than concrete blocks or clay pavers)

If blocks or pavers are selected, are they non-slip?

Is the selected material firm underfoot?
(granular material such as small river stones and gravel are unsuitable)

Are nearby plantings appropriate?
(need to consider final growth of trees, type of root system etc)

Yes

No

Comments

FOOTPATHS, STEPS, STAIRS ETC

CONSTRUCTION

Where less desirable materials have been chosen, the quality of the construction work becomes even more important.

Is the surface level?

Are blocks or pavers firmly embedded so that they do not lift or sink out of true?

Are all joints level?

Are other services within the footpath structure (eg. access hole covers) level with surface?

Where applicable, are the sides of paths highlighted? (eg. in parks to distinguish paths from garden beds)

Yes

No

Comments

Yes	No	Comments

FOOTPATHS, STEPS, STAIRS ETC

CONDITION	Yes	No	Comments
Are paths damaged in any way? (check for cracks, pot-holes, protruding tree roots)			
Are there any areas of subsidence?			
Are paths safe under all conditions? (check for overhanging branches, mould and lichen caused by shade; trees which drop leaves, flowers, berries or nuts; proximity of unsuitable landscaping materials such as gravel, pebbles, broken hard nut shells)			
Are paths kept free of builders' debris?			
Are paths free of litter, food scraps etc? (sufficient litter bins will assist)			

FOOTPATHS, STEPS, STAIRS ETC

OBSTRUCTIONS

Do walkways have clear passage and clear line of sight?

Do angle-parked cars obstruct paths?

Is all street furniture appropriately placed to allow free passage?

Are sandwich-boards and sidewalk displays of goods prohibited?

If not, are they restricted in number and placement to allow free passage?

Yes

No

Comments

	Yes	No	Comments

FOOTPATHS, STEPS, STAIRS ETC

MAINTENANCE	Yes	No	Comments
Is there a regular cleaning regime in place?			
Are regular checks carried out to ensure freedom from temporary obstructions and hazards?			
Is damage rectified immediately it is reported?			
Are other services monitored for standard of work and maintenance?			

FOOTPATHS, STEPS, STAIRS ETC

STEPS AND STAIRS	Yes	No	Comments
Are they kept to an absolute minimum?			
Are steps and stairs clearly visible in the landscape?			
Is the riser-to-tread ratio at least 1:7?			
Are they firm underfoot, especially on the leading edge? (check particularly edges with bricks laid on end or pavers overhanging)			
Are they wide enough for two people to walk abreast?			
Are they constructed of non-slip material? (eg. brushed or textured concrete)			
Is there an anti-slip leading edge to each step?			
Is the leading edge of each step highlighted by a contrasting material or colour?			
If the edge has a painted strip, is the paint non-slip?			
Are hand-holds or rails provided on both sides of steps?			

FOOTPATHS, STEPS, STAIRS ETC

STEPS AND STAIRS (continued)	Yes	No	Comments
Do the rails extend beyond the top and bottom of stair-run?			
Can a hand be fitted right round the rails?			
Are the rails securely fixed?			
Are the rails a contrasting colour to the background?			
Are long flights of stairs broken by a landing, preferably with seating provided?			
Are steps, rails, paint etc all well maintained?			
Are the steps free of overhanging branches, deep shade etc?			

FOOTPATHS, STEPS, STAIRS ETC

RAMPS

Is a ramp provided in preference to steps wherever possible?

Is the ramp clearly visible and well sign-posted?

Is the incline 1:14 or less?

Is the ramp wide enough for two people to walk abreast?

Is it constructed of non-slip material? (eg. brushed or textured concrete, asphalt)

Is the surface in good condition, level and free of cracks?

Are rails provided on both sides?

Do the rails extend beyond the ramp at both ends?

Can a hand be fitted right round the rails?

Are the rails securely fixed?

Are the rails a contrasting colour to the background?

Is the ramp cleaned regularly?

Are there no obstructions, overhanging branches, falling leaves etc?

Yes

No

Comments

FOOTPATHS, STEPS, STAIRS ETC

ROADWAYS

Are road shoulders sealed wherever possible?

If gravel is used on shoulders, is it regularly swept from walking surfaces?

Are traffic lights timed to allow older people sufficient time to cross?

Is there a safe median rest for older people?

Are there sufficient pedestrian crossings to accommodate the needs of older people?

Are pedestrian crossings marked with non-slip paint?

Is the paint regularly renewed?

Are pedestrian crossings highly visible, both to pedestrians and motorists?

Are pedestrian crossings situated a safe distance from street corners? (most injuries to older pedestrians from motor vehicles occur on corner crossings)

Is all signage of sufficient clarity and size for older people to read easily?

	Yes	No	Comments
<p>Are road shoulders sealed wherever possible?</p> <p>If gravel is used on shoulders, is it regularly swept from walking surfaces?</p> <p>Are traffic lights timed to allow older people sufficient time to cross?</p> <p>Is there a safe median rest for older people?</p> <p>Are there sufficient pedestrian crossings to accommodate the needs of older people?</p> <p>Are pedestrian crossings marked with non-slip paint?</p> <p>Is the paint regularly renewed?</p> <p>Are pedestrian crossings highly visible, both to pedestrians and motorists?</p> <p>Are pedestrian crossings situated a safe distance from street corners? (most injuries to older pedestrians from motor vehicles occur on corner crossings)</p> <p>Is all signage of sufficient clarity and size for older people to read easily?</p>			

SHOPPING CENTRES, MALLS ETC

ENTRANCE	Yes	No	Comments
Is it protected from the weather?			
Is the area well-maintained?			
If there are steps, are they clearly marked?			
Is the floor surface non-slip?			
Is the area well-lit?			
Is the area free of clutter for ease of entry?			
Are the doors self-opening?			
If not, can they be left open?			
Are any mats clearly visible and well secured?			

SHOPPING CENTRES, MALLS ETC

STEPS, STAIRS, RAMPS	Yes	No	Comments
Are they protected from weather?			
Are they well maintained?			
Are steps clearly marked?			
Are stairs closed rather than open type?			
Do all treads have a non-slip front edge?			
Are ramps non-slip?			
Is the ramp incline 1:14 or less?			
Are hand-rails provided on all stairs and ramps?			
Do they run on both sides?			
Do they extend at least 300 cms beyond each end?			
Are they well secured?			
Can they be fully gripped?			
Are all steps, stairs and ramps well lit?			
Do long stairways and ramps have rests at suitable intervals?			

SHOPPING CENTRES, MALLS ETC

LIGHTING

Is the general level of lighting sufficient for people with impaired vision?

Are areas of particular risk (eg. stair-wells and passages) well-lit?

Are the light fittings shaded to prevent glare?

Are lights positioned to avoid reflective glare?

Are all lights functioning?

Yes

No

Comments

SHOPPING CENTRES, MALLS ETC

FLOOR SURFACES	Yes	No	Comments
Are all walking surfaces non-slip?			
Are traffic pathways clearly visible and free of obstruction?			
Are there no loose mats, runners, etc. on floors?			
Are floors well-maintained, with no cracks, broken tiles, missing tiles, etc?			
Are floors free of litter, spilled liquids and food scraps?			
Are temporary hazards clearly announced? (eg. 'Caution - Wet Floor' signs)			
Are temporary displays/promotions safely mounted? (eg. power cords taped down)			

SHOPPING CENTRES, MALLS ETC

FURNITURE and FIXTURES	Yes	No	Comments
Is there sufficient seating to alleviate fatigue?			
Is seating comfortable and conveniently placed?			
Are litter-bins sufficient and clearly visible?			
Are signs kept away from traffic pathways unless necessary?			
Are there no signs protruding at head or body height?			
Are signs sufficiently large and clear for people with impaired vision?			

SHOPPING CENTRES, MALLS ETC

REST ROOMS	Yes	No	Comments
Are they clearly and frequently sign-posted?			
Are they located centrally rather than hidden away?			
Is only a short walk required to reach them?			
Are the access doors easily managed? (eg. by a frail person or anyone using a wheelchair or walking frame)			
Are the floor surfaces non-slip throughout?			
Is seating provided?			
Do hand-basins have non-slip mats or adhesive strips beneath them?			
Do cubicles have grab-rails provided and securely fixed?			

SHOPPING CENTRES, MALLS ETC

CLEANING	Yes	No	Comments
Is the floor cleaned at regular intervals? (eg. each 20 minutes)			
Is the cleaning method unlikely to increase risk of slipping?			
Is the major cleaning done with a grease-cutting or non-slip additive?			
Is the floor <i>never ever</i> waxed?			
Does the floor look shiny/slippy? (thus presenting a psychological hazard to many older people)			

SHOPPING CENTRES, MALLS ETC

LIFTS, ESCALATORS

Are both provided?

Are lifts clearly visible and easily reached?

Are lift doors self-opening?

Do they allow plenty of time for entry and exit?

Do lifts stop with floors exactly level with shop-floor?

Do lifts start off and stop smoothly?

Are escalators clearly visible and centrally located?

Do escalators move at an appropriate speed for older people?

Yes

No

Comments

SHOPPING CENTRES, MALLS ETC

POLICY and PRACTICE	Yes	No	Comments
Does the centre management have a safety policy that includes falls prevention?			
Is there an awareness of falls and understanding of falls prevention at management levels?			
Are all new staff given safety training/safety guidelines to follow?			
Are safety practices encouraged/enforced throughout centre?			
Do safety practices include controlling unruly/inappropriate/dangerous behaviour? (eg. skateboards)			
Is the public encouraged to contribute to overall safety?			
Is there a mechanism in place for this? (eg. suggestion box)			

HAZARD REPORT

1. Date
2. Exact location of hazard (include details to aid identification, such as street names, numbers, nearest corner, building names).
.....
.....
3. Type of hazard:

broken surface	slippery surface
raised surface	obstruction
depressed surface or pot-hole	inadequate lighting
tree root	overhanging branches
steps	inappropriate parking
lack of hand-hold	traffic flow/road crossing
other (please specify)	debris/litter

.....
4. Type of surface (eg. concrete, asphalt, blocks, pavers etc)
.....
5. Description of problem.....
.....
6. Reported by.....
7. Would you like to know about the action taken? Yes / No
9. If yes, would you please supply a contact address and phone number
.....
.....
9. Please return this form to.....
.....

OFFICE USE: Received by On

 Actioned by On

 Responded On

FALL OR NEAR-FALL REPORT FORM

1. Date of incident
2. Exact location (include details to aid identification, such as street names, numbers, nearest corner, building names)
.....
.....
3. What caused the fall or near-fall?
A hazard such as a broken foot-path, tree root, litter,
slippery path?
or
Another person, such as a cyclist, jogger, skateboarder?
4. Please give details of what happened
5. Was there an injury?
6. Reported by
7. Are you the person who fell?
8. Would you like to know about the action taken? Yes / No
9. If yes, would you please supply a contact address and phone number
.....
.....
10. Please return this form to

OFFICE USE : Received by On

 Actioned by On

 Responded On

REQUEST FOR MAINTENANCE WORKS

NAME

COMPLAINANT'S ADDRESS

.....

LOCATION OF WORK

.....

TELEPHONE (PRIVATE) (BUSINESS)

NATURE OF COMPLAINT (Indicate by ✓)

- () ROAD SHOULDERS
- () WATERTABLES (GUTTERS)
- () BITUMEN ROAD PATCHING
- () GRAVEL ROAD
- () TREE OVERGROWTH
- () STREET SIGNS
- () OTHER

.....

.....

Date Signature

OFFICE USE ONLY

RECOMMENDED ACTION/REFER TO

.....

Date Signature