

IRIC Safety Bulletin

Dental chair destabilised: risk of injury

What happened?

A powered, variable-height dental chair was lowered by a member of staff at the start of a session. As it lowered, part of the chair snagged the top of a stool which had gone unnoticed.

The staff member continued to hold the 'lower' button on the control handset. As the motor continued to run, the dental chair became unstable and it quickly toppled.

There was no occupant in the chair and the operator was unharmed. However, it was recognised this had been a near miss with potential for injury.

What did we learn?

An examination found that the dental chair had not been secured to the floor in accordance with the manufacturer's installation guidance. Situations like this can arise at initial installation, repair, servicing, or following a refurbishment project.

Installation methods and incorrect fasteners and parts, which do not conform to manufacturer specifications, can result in dental chairs becoming unstable during use.

A system of inspection should consider suitable checks and inspections. The manufacturer's installation and maintenance manual should be regarded as the minimum standard required.

How can it be prevented?

Use manufacturer-approved installers and servicing agents when possible.

Develop a system of inspection and maintenance which ensures dental chairs are, and remain, secured using the specified parts and in accordance with the manufacturer's installation guidance.

Ensure that staff are trained in fault-reporting procedures and the steps to take when equipment is in an unsafe condition.

Similar chairs used in podiatry and optometry may also need to be secured to the treatment or examination room floor. Always ensure the manufacturer's installation and maintenance instructions are followed.

If you become aware of an adverse incident or near miss, or if you have a safety concern about a piece of equipment, report it to IRIC (details below). Incidents and near misses should also be reported to your local incident reporting and learning system which you might know as InPhase, Datix or Ulyses.

IRIC Incident Reporting & Investigation Centre

To find safety alerts:
scan the QR code or [click this link to visit our website](#)



To report an incident:
scan the QR code or [click this link to visit our website](#)

