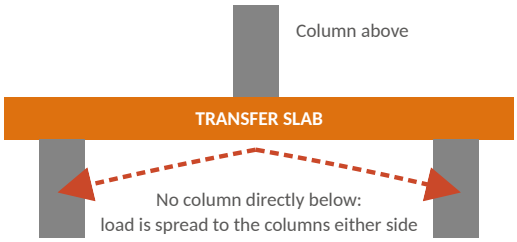
Transfer slabs in existing buildings

What building and estates owners need to know, and the first steps to manage the risk

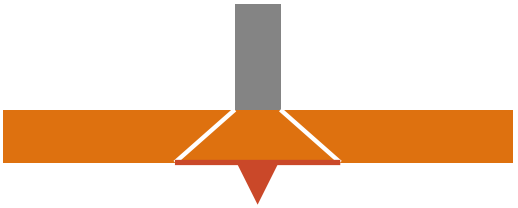
Why this is in the spotlight now. In November 2024 the Institution of Structural Engineers (IStructE) published new guidance on designing transfer slabs. It was written for new buildings, but it raised questions about whether older design methods gave existing slabs enough strength. The Building Safety Regulator alerted building owners to the potential risk in December 2025, RICS followed with a Practice Alert in January 2026, and the regulator and IStructE issued further guidance in July 2026. The message is consistent: a transfer slab does not, on its own, mean a building is unsafe or needs to be vacated, but owners are expected to know where their transfer slabs are and to manage them proportionately.

WHAT IS A TRANSFER SLAB?



Common where the column grid changes between floors, for example residences over car parks, retail or podium space, and large halls beneath cellular floors.

WHY IT MATTERS



Recent design guidance has raised questions about whether historic design methods allowed enough capacity. In the worst case, failure could cause partial collapse.

25+
years of common use in UK reinforced concrete buildings

0
recorded UK collapses from this cause to date

Most
transfer slabs are likely to be adequate, says the regulator

2027
dedicated IStructE assessment guidance expected

HIGHER RISK WHERE…

Water reaches it
Car parks, podiums, external decks

Loads change
New use, plant, storage, roof equipment

It is cut or drilled
Coring, new openings, intrusive surveys

WARNING SIGNS

Cracked slab
Or tiling fixed to it

Cracked columns
Or walls just above or below

Sticking doors
On the floor just above

New or growing cracks? Seek urgent specialist advice.

FIVE FIRST STEPS FOR OWNERS

1 Identify
Check drawings and records to find which buildings have transfer slabs. If you don't know, ask a structural engineer or surveyor.

2 Control works
No coring, new openings or load changes without a competent structural engineer's prior check.

3 Watch
Brief facilities and building teams on the warning signs, and act on concerns raised by occupants.

4 Keep it dry
Prioritise waterproofing and drainage where slabs are exposed to water.

5 Assess and record
Get an engineer's assessment for priority buildings, and record each slab on your risk register. For higher-risk buildings, review your safety case, and talk to your insurers.

Need help screening your buildings or putting controls in place?
Talk to Monaghans' Health & Safety Consultancy team.

Tel: 0114 249 2000 | e: steve.hanson@monaghans.co.uk | www.monaghans.co.uk

Sources: Building Safety Regulator, Potential risks from transfer slabs in buildings (Dec 2025) and Transfer slabs toolkit (updated Oct 2026); IStructE, Design and assessment of reinforced concrete transfer slabs (Jul 2026); RICS Practice Alert (Jan 2026). Applies to England. This guide is general information, not advice on any specific building. Issued November 2026.