

STAY SAFE WITH SOCIETY

FLOOR AND WALL OPENINGS

Falls cause more injuries (about one-third of all serious injuries) in the construction industry than any other type of accident. Protection of floor openings is crucial. If you have to remove guard rails, covers, or barricades to do your work, put them back as soon as the work is finished. This is also true if workers walk away from their task for even a few minutes. If you see an unprotected opening, tell your supervisor immediately or fix it yourself.

Rails, covers, and barricades must be sturdy. The top rail of a guard rail is installed 42- to 45-inches above the floor. It must support 200 pounds applied in the downward or outward direction without sagging below 39 inches. The material choice is up to you, but wire rope, 2x4 lumber, and piping are common choices.

Covers must be able to support twice the anticipated weight that may be applied, and secured to prevent movement.

OSHA standards define a hole as a gap or void of 2 inches or more in its least dimension, in a floor, roof, or other walking/working surface. While you can fall through a big hole, materials and tools can drop through smaller holes, striking the workers below. A small hole also can cause a worker to trip or twist their foot or ankle and fall.

Checklist:

- Do you cover or guard floor holes immediately, as soon as they are made?
- Do you use guard rail systems, safety-net systems, or fall-arrest systems if an employee is exposed to a fall of 6 feet or more?
- Are floor hole covers constructed to support two times the weight of employees, equipment and materials that may be placed on the cover?



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A Small Detail
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