



Holes

HOLES HAZARDS:

Understanding tripping and fall hazards, as well as the capacities of covers and limitations of restraint systems, is essential when working over, near, or in holes. Often, protecting unaware personnel isn't our primary focus—but it should be. We need to use highly visible signs, toe boards, guardrails, covers, and entry restrictions (such as controlled access zones and barricades) to properly mark, cover, barricade, or guard any hole. Don't assume everyone will see the hole, step around it, or avoid entering it unknowingly.

ISSUES:

Falls into holes on construction sites can cause serious injuries or death. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) considers falls to be a major hazard in construction. OSHA defines a hole as a gap or void that is at least 2 inches in its smallest dimension and is on a walking or working surface. Falls into smaller holes or wrongful entry into larger holes can result in a range of injuries, including broken bones, brain injuries, nerve damage, disfigurement, paralysis, and even death.

OSHA HOLES HAZARDS REQUIREMENTS:

OSHA Standard Subpart M Fall Protection - 1926.501(a)(2) The employer shall determine if the walking/working surfaces on which its employees are to work have the strength and structural integrity to support employees safely. Employees shall be allowed to work on those surfaces only when the surfaces have the requisite strength and structural integrity.

OSHA Standard Subpart M Fall Protection - 1926.501(b)(4)(i) & 1926.501(b)(4)(iii) Each employee on walking/working surfaces shall be protected from falling through holes (including skylights) more than 6 feet (1.8 m) above lower levels, by personal fall arrest systems, covers, or guardrail systems erected around such holes.

OSHA Standard Subpart M Fall Protection - 1926.501(b)(7)(ii) Each employee at the edge of a well, pit, shaft, and

similar excavation 6 feet (1.8 m) or more in depth shall be protected from falling by guardrail systems, fences, barricades, or covers.

OSHA Standard Subpart G Signs & Barricades - 1926.203(b) Signs are the warnings of hazard, temporarily or permanently affixed or placed, at locations where hazards exist.

OSHA Standard Subpart T Demolition - 1926.856(a) Mechanical equipment shall not be used on floors or working surfaces unless such floors or surfaces are of sufficient strength to support the imposed load, 1926.856(b) Floor openings shall have curbs or stop-logs to prevent equipment from running over the edge.

OSHA Standard Subpart P Excavations 1926.651(f) Warning system for mobile equipment. When mobile equipment is operated adjacent to an excavation, or when such equipment is required to approach the edge of an excavation, and the operator does not have a clear and direct view of the edge of the excavation, a warning system shall be utilized such as barricades, hand or mechanical signals, or stop logs. If possible, the grade should be away from the excavation.

OSHA Standard Subpart AA Confined Spaces 1926.1203(e)(2)(ii) When entrance covers are removed, the opening must be immediately guarded by a railing, temporary cover, or other temporary barrier that will prevent an accidental fall through the opening and that will protect each employee working in space from foreign objects entering the space.

OSHA HOLES HAZARDS REQUIREMENTS:

A labeled hole cover is an engineering control that may help to reduce the risk of falling through a hole or opening in the walking/working surface. Hole covers are a physical barrier placed over a hole or opening in the working surface that, if installed properly, will prevent a person from falling through.

Never cover a hole with any type of non-substantial or non-weight-bearing material(s) such as paper, cardboard, or plastic.

Employers must follow OSHA guidelines for fall protection when covering floor holes, ensuring the workplace is free of serious hazards and reducing risks by making feasible changes in working conditions.

Every temporary floor opening shall have standard railings or shall be constantly attended by someone. Every floor hole that employees can accidentally walk over shall be guarded by either a standard railing with a standard toe board on all exposed sides and provide a standard strength and construction.

The Contractor shall provide fall protection for all workers in compliance with 29 CFR 1926. The Contractor shall include procedures to provide fall protection in the Project Safety and Health Plan.

Covers located in roadways should be capable of supporting at least twice the maximum axle load of the largest vehicle expected to cross the cover. All covers should be secured to prevent accidental displacement by the wind, equipment, or employees.

Manholes, storm water drains, holes/entrances to vaults, etc. can quickly become a confined space. It is your responsibility to ensure that there cannot be accidental or deliberate entrance.

During demolition opened or exposed holes must be immediately evaluated for trip hazards, fall hazards, and existing or changing atmospheric hazards and adequately made safe for everybody.

FOCUS POINTS YOU NEED TO KNOW:

1. If the hole must be open, install permanent barriers around the perimeter.
2. Communicate any hazards with other workers in the area immediately.

3. Notify your supervisor or management team of any new openings.
4. Floor holes through which materials or tools may fall and create a struck-by hazard, shall be completely covered.
5. A cover that leaves no openings more than 2 inches wide must be provided for every floor hole into which persons can accidentally contact.
6. The 5 steps of fall prevention:
 - a. Identify the risks.
 - b. Avoid the risk.
 - c. Control the risk.
 - d. Respond to incidents.
 - e. Maintain risk prevention.
7. Requirements for hole covers:
 - a. Capable of supporting at least twice the maximum load expected to cross over the cover.
 - b. Shall be secured when installed to prevent displacement.
 - c. Shall be marked with the word "HOLE" or "COVER"
8. If you are excavating and you encounter a hole the first rule is to stop digging.
9. Never enter a hole unless you are trained and qualified to do so.
10. Consider that many holes that you and others can step in, fall into, or enter might be a "Confined Space."

OSHA. "1926.501 - Duty to Have Fall Protection. | Occupational Safety and Health Administration." Osha.gov, 2019, www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1926/1926.501.

"1926 Subpart G - Signs, Signals, and Barricades | Occupational Safety and Health Administration." www.osha.gov, www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1926/1926SubpartG.

"1926.856 - Removal of Walls, Floors, and Material with Equipment. | Occupational Safety and Health Administration." Osha.gov, 2024, www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1926/1926.856. Accessed 4 Nov. 2024.

"1926.1203 - General Requirements. | Occupational Safety and Health Administration." www.osha.gov, www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1926/1926.1203.

OUR PURPOSE

Lead. Make a difference. Build a better future!

OUR VALUES

Safety: First. Last. Always!

Steadfast Integrity: Be honest. Treat other with respect.

Exceptional Service: Align goals. Add value. Develop lasting relationships.

Commitment to Excellence: Take ownership. Constantly improve.

Focus on Team: Listen. Collaborate. Communicate. Execute.

