

HEALTH AND SAFETY ADVISORY

Working Around Roof Openings and Skylights

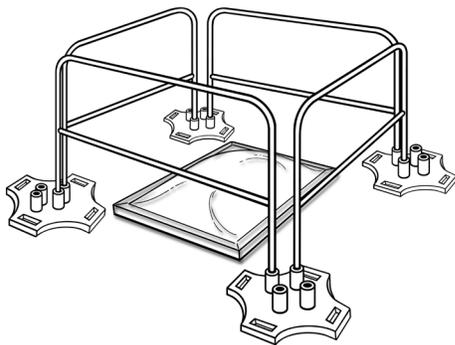
In recent years, there have been a number of incidents where workers have fallen through roof openings and skylights. These incidents have resulted in critical injuries and fatalities. With this in mind, it is important to be aware of our responsibilities under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHS/A) and some straightforward ways to prevent these types of incidents from occurring.

The Construction Projects regulation under the OHS/A requires that workers be prevented from falling through an opening on a work surface with either a guardrail system or a protective covering (O. Reg. 213/91, s.26.3(2)). Workers can use a travel restraint or fall arrest system for protection, but **only** if it is not possible to use a guardrail or protective cover.

Guardrails

Guardrails must be provided around all roof openings that are not fitted with permanent or temporary coverings. If the guardrail is made of wood, it must be constructed and installed so that it is capable of resisting all loads that it may be subjected to. If the guardrail is not made of wood, it must meet the requirements of O. Reg. 213/91, s.26.3(4).

Remember that while workers are installing temporary guardrails, they **must** use a fall protection system to protect against a fall.



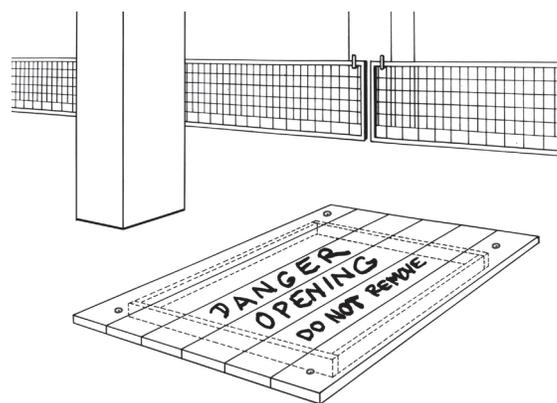
Moveable Guardrail

Covers

Guardrails are the preferred method for protecting workers around roof openings, but they may not always be practical. Opening covers are the next best option. If covers are used, they must:

- Completely cover the opening
- Be securely fastened
- Be adequately identified as a covering for an opening
- Be made from material that is adequate to support all loads to which the covering may be subjected
- Be capable of supporting a live load of at least 2.4 kN/m² without exceeding the allowable unit stresses for the material used.

Make opening covers stand out with bright paint. Include a warning such as **DANGER! OPENING—DO NOT REMOVE! DO NOT LOAD!** Always **fasten the cover securely** to prevent workers from removing it and falling through the opening.



NOTE: Where permanent covers or hatches are installed, they should be kept closed at all times, except when they are being used for access.

Skylights

Skylight openings must be treated the same as all other roof openings. Even after a skylight is installed, it may seem like the area is safe. However, a skylight has very little strength. If a worker were to step on or fall into a skylight, it could break, causing the worker to fall to the level below.

To prevent this hazard, install temporary guarding around each skylight near the work area.

General Contractors, Constructors, or Owners

If you—as a general contractor, constructor, or owner—have installed temporary guardrails or protective covers around roof openings so that multiple trades or subcontractors can access the roof safely, it is your responsibility to ensure they are in place and maintained.

On a regular basis, verify that all the covers are in place. If they are not in place, stop work in the area until they are in place. Instruct all subcontractors that if a guardrail or cover has to be removed to perform work, they must:

- Keep all other workers out of the area.
- Use another means of fall protection while performing the work.
- Replace the guardrail or covers when they leave the area.

Many workers have fallen through roof openings when the area was left unattended or when inadequate protection was used.

Workers

If you—as a worker—must remove a cover or guardrail to perform your work, it is your responsibility under the OHS Act to replace it when your task is complete. It is also your responsibility under the OHS Act to notify your supervisor if you notice an unprotected opening.



Remember to always use another means of fall protection when working near an unprotected opening.

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