

Floor and roof openings

Explain dangers

If proper guarding is not in place, workers can be exposed to falls when working around floor and roof openings. Avoiding such hazards may seem like common sense, but a moment of distraction around an uncovered opening can end in disaster.

Identify controls

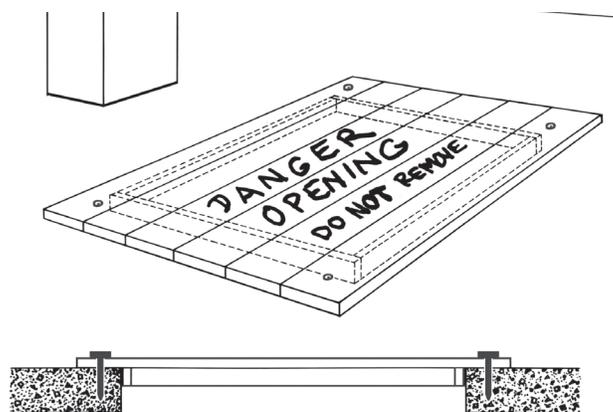
Installing guardrails around an opening is the best solution to prevent falls. In places such as narrow access routes where guardrails cannot be installed, protective covers made of planks, plywood, or steel plates are the next best option.

According to the Construction Projects regulation (O. Reg. 213/91, s. 26.3(2)), protective covers must:

- Completely cover the opening
- Be securely fastened
- Be identified as covering an opening
- Be made from material that can support any load that may be put on it (at least 2.4 kN/m²)

The labels on opening covers need to stand out on a busy worksite. Use bright paint to create a warning sign on the cover that says something like—DANGER! OPENING—DO NOT REMOVE! DO NOT LOAD! If you use a symbol, like an X, tell all workers what the symbol means during orientation.

- Always use another means of fall protection when installing, removing, or working near an unprotected opening.
- Always fasten the cover securely to prevent workers from removing it and falling through the opening.
- Make sure the opening is picture-framed and secure to the cover above. This prevents unwanted movement should the fasteners fail over time.
- Where permanent covers or hatches are installed, remember to keep them closed at all times except when they are being used for access. Prior to exposing an opening, workers should have other means of fall protection in place, such as a guardrail or travel restraints.



Protective cover

- Where temporary covers are used, make sure they extend enough past the opening to provide sufficient strength (e.g., 15 cm [6 in.]).
- If the cover is made of wood, use full-sized No. 1 spruce planks 48 mm x 248 mm (1-7/8 in. x 9-3/4 in.).
- Never store materials on a protective cover.
- Never stand on, walk on, or drive over a protective cover.
- Tell your supervisor if a protective cover is loose, not fastened, not properly identified, or in poor condition.
- Treat skylights like any other roof openings. While it may seem covered, a skylight has very little strength. If a worker were to step on it or fall into it, they could fall through. Install temporary guarding around or over each skylight near the work area or use barricades to keep workers away from them.

Demonstrate

After you talk about floor and roof openings, take a look around the jobsite. If there is an unprotected roof or floor opening, install a cover and review how this complies with the legislation. If you cannot install a floor or roof covering, then talk about what everyone has seen on previous jobsites and what types of openings they have encountered.

Has anyone seen an incident involving an opening? How could it have been prevented?