



PLAYING IT **SAFE**

Floor Opening Safety Precautions

Preventing falls while working near floor openings

Quick fixes such as plywood floor coverings allow construction workers to move quickly from task to task. Even though these items aim to modify a dangerous situation in the short-term, they still pose serious safety hazards.

Examples

Potential floor opening accidents could include:

- A worker picks up a plywood cover to use in another area of the construction site and loses his or her balance while picking it up. Then, the worker falls into the hole and is injured.
- A worker steps onto a tarp or cardboard opening cover not knowing what was under it and falls into the opening.
- A worker drives a forklift over a plywood or cardboard covered opening and falls through because the load is too heavy for the covering.

Fall Prevention

Don't have a similar accident yourself; follow these safety tips to reduce your risk of accidents when working near floor openings.

- Use guardrails (the preferred method of protection) or cover holes with planks, plywood or steel plates. Never use paper, tarp or cardboard.
- Fasten the cover so that it is not easily removed, and use cleats on

the underside that fit into the hole to prevent sliding.

- Paint the cover a distinct color to contrast with the surroundings. Post a warning sign either on or near the cover to warn others.
- Alert other workers of the location of a floor cover to prevent accidental falls.
- Never sit on, lean against or step onto a floor cover without knowing if it can support your weight.
- Guard all new holes immediately to prevent others from falling into them.
- Always use a personal fall arrest system (PFAS), which includes a full-body harness, lanyard, connectors and appropriate anchorage points (tie-offs) when working over an uncovered opening more than six feet above a lower level.
- Inspect PFAS daily and report damage to your supervisor immediately.
- Notify your supervisor if there are any unguarded openings on the job site.



Be Smart About Fall Protection!

Falls are one of the most reported on-the-job injuries. To reduce your risk of falls, participate in all safety and health training programs offered by your employer. You can also visit OSHA's website for additional fall safety tips at www.osha.gov.