

## Floor Openings

Unprotected holes in the floor, deck or roof are the cause of many serious injuries. Through planning and personal attention, falls through openings under foot are easily prevented. OSHA defines a “floor opening” as an opening measuring less than 12 inches but more than 1 inch in its least dimension, in any floor, platform, pavement, or yard, through which materials but not persons may fall; such as a belt hole, pipe opening, or slot opening.

### **Hazards to watch for:**

- Be extremely careful if you have to walk over cardboard, plastic or drywall. A hole could be lurking underneath. Step very tentatively.
- If you find a hole, expose it immediately for others to see.
- Barricade a hole or post someone to warn others of the danger, and notify the foreman.
- Even shallow holes can cause serious injuries.

### **Safe procedures:**

- If you make a hole, guard it. Before cutting the hole, barricade the work area to keep people out.
- If the hole must be open, install permanent barricades around the perimeter. Like railings around the edge of a building or stairwell. These must be a minimum of forty-two inches high, have a mid-rail and be capable of withstanding a 200-pound load. Toe boards are recommended at all times and are required if anyone is going to work under the hole.
- If the hole is not guarded, it must be covered. The cover must be capable of supporting at least a 200- pound load, be larger than the opening, secured against displacement, and labeled “Floor Opening, Do Not Remove.”
- Never cover a hole with any type of non-substantial material such as paper, cardboard or plastic.
- You should never stand or sit on a skylight. They are not made to support your weight. If you do sit or stand on one, odds are it will break and you will fall. If installing skylights, protect the openings until installation is complete.

Floor openings can be very dangerous. If unprotected, a worker may step in the wrong place and have a serious fall. When protected with substandard materials or just hidden by cardboard, an unsuspecting worker will likely step there and be seriously injured. The control is simple. This is a hazard that should never exist.

