



## Open Holes Toolbox Talk

Falls through unprotected openings are a serious hazard to workers that can result in serious injuries and death. Open holes are common in roadworks, construction, demolition, and renovation works. Falls through open holes still remain one of the most prevalent risks on a construction site.

### Why run a Building Shaft and Open Holes Toolbox Talk?

- Make workers aware of the risk
- What to do to help prevent workers from falling
- Cover legal duties

### Definition of Building Shaft and Open Hole

Shafts	Open Hole/Floor Opening
A continuous vertical space that is substantially enclosed on all sides for two or more floors and includes elevator shafts, ventilation shafts, stairwells, and service shafts	An opening in a floor, platform, pavement, or yard that measures 2 inches or more in its smallest dimension.

Examples of floor holes are – manholes, skylights, missing floorboards, precast concrete openings, and roof and floor drains.

### Requirements

Legal responsibility for who is responsible for ensuring that building shafts and open holes are covered may vary from country to country. In the USA, it is the responsibility of the employer, main contractor, owner, and workers to ensure that building shafts and open holes are covered securely and may require the following:

- Must be capable of supporting any load placed on it or workers standing on it
- Secured, so it cannot be easily removed
- The cover should cover the entire opening

### Risk Assessment/Hazards That May Result in Falls

- Unguarded openings
- Improperly secured openings
- Covers that cannot support weight
- Material falling through the openings
- Poor lighting making an opening difficult to see
- Improperly labelled openings
- Poor housekeeping – debris and equipment covering openings



## **Control Measures and Safeguards**

Implement the following safe work practices to reduce injuries:

- Assess work site for opening and holes (secured or unsecured), prior to work starting
- If the hole must be open, install permanent barriers around the perimeter
- Communicate any hazards with other workers in the area
- Notify your supervisor of any unprotected/unguarded openings
- Adhere to the Company fall protection program

## **Ensure covers do the following:**

- Completely cover the opening
- Are securely fastened
- Are labelled correctly
- Can support any load that may be encountered on the work site
- Guard rails installed entirely around the opening

## **Key takeaways:**

- Falls can cause injuries and even death
- Ensure openings are covered properly
- Implement Safe work practices
- Everyone is responsible to ensure that openings are covered properly