



Toolbox Talks

Floor Holes



OSHA considers any gap larger than 2 inches wide on any walking/working surface as a floor hole. Even holes, cracks or depressions in the ground that are as small as 2 inches wide can still pose a serious tripping hazard.

OSHA categorizes floor holes into two main types:

- Holes **more than 6 feet deep** that a person can fall into that **require protection by fall arrest systems, guardrails or covers.**
- Holes **less than 6 feet deep** (no minimum depth specified) that **require employees to be protected from tripping or stepping into the holes by placing covers over them.**

OSHA Standard 1926.501(b)(4)(ii) Each employee on a walking/working surface shall be protected from tripping in or stepping into or through holes by covers.

- Floor holes or openings must be protected to prevent workers from tripping and/or falling into them.
- The floor hole cover should be strong and durable enough to withstand at least twice the weight of employees, equipment and materials that may be imposed on the cover at any time.
- **When a hole is not in use, always ensure it is protected** by a cover or a guardrail system that is erected along all unprotected sides of the hole.
- Skylights must have fall arrest systems, guardrails or covers to prevent falls to lower levels.
- Do not work near skylights unless adequate fall protection is in place.

OSHA Standard 1926.501(b)(4)(iii) Each employee on a walking/working surface shall be protected from objects falling through holes (including skylights) by covers.

OSHA Standard 1926.502(i)(1) Covers [for floor holes] located in roadways and vehicular aisles shall be capable of supporting, without failure, at least twice the maximum axle load of the largest vehicle expected to cross over the cover.

- Floor hole covers should be installed or secured in a way to prevent accidental displacement by the wind, equipment or other employees.
- Never use paper, cardboard, a tarp, or other soft material to cover a floor hole.
- Guard all new floor holes immediately.
- Always use a personal fall arrest system (PFAS) when it is required to work near or over any uncovered opening more than 6-feet above a lower level.

