Floor Openings Stats and Facts

FACTS

Through planning and personal attention, falls through openings under foot are very easy to prevent.

1. If you make a hole, guard it. Before cutting the hole, barricade the work area to keep people out.
2. If the hole must be open, install permanent barricades around the perimeter. Like railings around the edge of a building or stairwell, these should 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.
3. 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”. If you have a choice, make a round opening and cover. An oversized round cover cannot fall through a smaller round hole.
4. Never cover a hole with any type of non-substantial material such as paper, cardboard or plastic. You may ask, “Why would anyone do that?”
5. Be extremely careful if you have to walk over protective paper or plastic. A hole could be lurking underneath. Step very tentatively. If you find a hole, expose it immediately for others to see, barricade it or post someone to warn others of the danger, and notify your supervisor. Even shallow holes can cause serious injuries.
6. Plastic skylights and smoke vents are very popular. 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.

STATS

- In 2014, 40 % of worker deaths on construction sites were caused by falls, often through wall openings, floor holes, ladders, scaffolding, roofing, and unprotected edges. OSHA recommends using guardrails, fall arrest systems, safety nets, covers, and restraint systems in order to reduce the risk of injury and death from falls.
- More than 800 construction workers die every year while on the job. Falls from floor openings are the number one cause of fatalities in construction.
- Deaths from falls caused by floor openings lead fatalities in construction. Construction workers just as often die from fall-through hazards as they do from work at elevations. In 2018, OSHA logged the preventable deaths of 320 workers.
- Occupational fatalities caused by falls from floor openings remain a serious public health problem throughout the United States. The U.S. Department of Labor lists falls as one of the leading causes of traumatic occupational death, accounting for 8% of all occupational fatalities from trauma (approximately 289 of 3,610 deaths).