



TOOL BOX TALKS



FLOOR OPENINGS – COVER OR PROTECT

Covering a floor opening with a piece of plywood requires more than just laying the material over the hole, and nailing it down.

Total safety on the job means a total job of eliminating a hazard. Half a job... inadequate or incomplete jobs of covering hole hazards can result only in half, inadequate, or incomplete accident prevention.

Here's an example of an accident that illustrates the point. A carpenter on a floor above called down to a laborer to hand him a sheet of plywood. The laborer walked over to a sheet lying on the floor, picked it up, took a step or two forward in the act of standing the plywood up, and he went sailing right down through the floor hole, which was meant to contain an air duct. Why did it happen?

Although originally nailed down with 8d concrete nails, the plywood over the hole wasn't large enough. It did not overlap the hole adequately. The traffic over it caused the plywood to spring until it loosened the nails. Floor hole covers must adequately cover the hole, be secured in place and be able to withstand twice the weight that is intended to be placed on it. Consider the weight of workers, tools, equipment and aerial lifts.

Strong consideration should be given to barricading the area to prevent aerial lifts and equipment from falling into the hole (even if it is covered).

In this example, the plywood over the hole wasn't marked in any way.

There was no warning of any kind on it and the worker mistook it for a piece of loose material lying on the floor. Floor hole covers must be marked "FLOOR HOLE COVER". A common way to do that is with florescent spray paint.

The worker wasn't told about it. He wasn't made aware of the fact that the covering of floor openings was a required job procedure to prevent accidents. Nor was he told that he must maintain and report such danger spots. A good job-site-specific safety orientation identifies the potential hazards, trains the workers on how to eliminate the hazards of the job and outlines the process for reporting jobsite hazards.

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Anything less than total safety is no safety at all. The total safety attitude must be kept in mind when floor openings are being covered.

- The hole should be covered securely, with a cover big enough and strong enough to prevent failure.
- It should be marked with a danger warning.
- Every employee on the job should be warned about it.

