

TOOLBOX TALK: FLOOR AND ROOF OPENINGS

Job or site _____

Date _____

Led by _____

Open with this

How many openings are in the deck we are standing on? Count them out loud. If we cannot agree on the number, that is the talk.

The talk

A hole is any gap two inches or more in its least dimension in a floor, roof or other walking surface. That is smaller than most people picture. A two inch gap catches a boot and breaks an ankle. A stair opening kills.

The rule is simple: cover it, guard it, or fill it. A cover has to hold at least twice the weight of any worker, equipment and material that could be on it at once. That means real material, sized properly, not a scrap of quarter inch luan.

Then it gets secured. A cover that is not fastened down is a cover that slides sideways the first time somebody drags a compressor across it. Screw it, cleat it, block it, but fix it in place.

Then it gets marked. One word in spray paint, HOLE or COVER, on the top face. This is the step everybody skips and it is the step that saves the electrician who shows up on Thursday and has no idea what was framed on Monday.

The rule about removing one: whoever takes a cover off owns that hole until it is back. Not the foreman, not the next trade. If you have to pull a cover to run a duct, you guard the opening while it is open and you put the cover back before you leave the floor, even if you are coming back in an hour.

This is also a housekeeping talk in disguise. Openings get lost under debris, stacked material and sheet goods. If you cannot see the deck, you cannot see the hole in it.

Point at these before anybody starts

- Every opening on this level: stairwells, chases, shafts, floor sinks, skylight curbs
- Each cover, and whether it is actually fastened down or just laid over
- The marking on each cover, readable from standing height
- Anything stacked on top of a cover that stops it being seen

- Guardrails at the stair opening and any shaft big enough to fall down
- The edge of the deck itself, which is the biggest opening on the floor

The rules that apply

- Any hole 2 inches or more in the least dimension gets a cover, a guardrail or a fill, with no exceptions for small ones.
- Covers support at least twice the weight of workers, equipment and materials that could be imposed at any one time.
- Covers are secured against accidental displacement by wind, equipment or foot traffic.
- Every cover is marked HOLE or COVER, or color coded to a site standard everyone has been told about.
- Whoever removes a cover guards the opening for as long as it is open and replaces the cover before leaving the area.
- Skylights count as holes and get a screen, a cover or a guardrail before roof work begins.

Ask the crew

- Is there an opening on this job you have walked past all week and stopped noticing?
- Who is pulling a cover today, and what is guarding that hole while it is off?
- If a cover here got stepped on by two of us and a cart, would it hold?

Close with this

Cover it, fasten it, mark it. If you take one off, it is yours until it is back on.

Attendance

Everybody who was present signs, including subcontractors and anybody visiting the site.

	Print name and signature
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This talk is general safety information for a crew briefing, not legal advice and not a substitute for the training your employees are required to have. Standards are quoted for orientation only. Check the current text of the standard and your own state plan, which may be stricter than the federal rule.