MIOSHA Fact Sheet

Falls – Unprotected Sides, Wall Openings, and Floor Holes

Falls are one of the leading causes of fatalities in the construction industry. In 2020, 351 fatal falls occurred nationwide. MIOSHA investigated 21 fatalities over the 5-year period of 2018 through 2022 related to falls at construction work sites.

Almost all construction work sites have unprotected sides and edges, wall openings, or floor holes at some point during construction. If these sides and openings are not protected at the work site, injuries from falls or falling objects range from sprains and contusions to death. Construction Standard Part 1, General Rules, Rule 114 requires an Accident Prevention Program at every construction work site which must address hazards, including falls. Construction Standard Part 45, Fall Protection, addresses minimum requirements and criteria for fall protection at construction workplaces.

How To Avoid Hazards

- Use at least one of the following whenever employees are exposed to a fall of 6 feet or more above a lower level: guardrail systems, safety net systems, or personal fall arrest systems.
- A wall opening more than 30 inches in height and more than 18 inches in width must be protected by guardrail systems, safety net systems or personal fall arrest systems.
- Cover or guard floor holes as soon as they are created throughout new construction projects.
- For existing structures, survey the site before working and continually audit as work continues. Guard or cover any openings or holes immediately.
- Construct all floor hole covers so they will effectively support two times the weight of employees, equipment, and materials that may be imposed on the cover at any one time, this includes skylights. Covers must be secured and color coded or marked with the words "HOLE" or "COVER."
- In general, it is better to provide fall prevention systems, such as guardrails, than fall protection systems, such as safety nets or fall arrest devices, because they provide more positive safety means by eliminating the hazard of falling.

If you need additional assistance, please contact the Construction Safety and Health Division at 517-284-7680 or the Consultation Education and Training Division at 517-284-7720. Construction Safety Standards and other information can be viewed on the MIOSHA website at www.michigan.gov/miosha.