

Floor and Wall Openings Covering OHS Requirements in Each Province



Fall protection requirements for floor and wall openings vary across Canada.

The OHS laws require employers to protect workers from fall hazards, including openings in floors, walls and other work surfaces. The 2 principle options in most jurisdictions: 1. Install a fixed guardrail around the opening; or 2. Cover the opening with a securely attached covering strong enough to support the load without collapsing if a worker were to step or fall on it. Here are the specific requirements in each part of Canada.

FEDERAL

A floor opening or wall opening from which there's a drop of more than 1.2 m to which an employee has access must have highly visible guardrails around the opening or be covered with material capable of supporting all loads that may be brought to bear on it which is securely fastened to and supported by structural members (COHS Reg., Sec. 2.5).

Floor openings defined as openings in a floor, platform, pavement or yard that measure 300 mm or more in their smallest dimension; wall openings defined as openings in a wall or partition that measure at least 750 mm in height and 300 mm in

width. **Exception:** Neither definition includes vehicle maintenance pits (COHS Reg., Sec. 2.1).

ALBERTA

Employer must ensure that an opening or hole through which a worker can fall is protected by: (a) a securely attached cover designed to support an anticipated load; or (b) guardrails and toe boards (OHS Code, Sec. 314(1)).

If a person removes a cover, guardrail or toe board, or any part, that's protecting an opening or hole for any reason, employer must ensure a temporary cover or other means of protection replaces it immediately (OHS Code, Sec. 314(2)).

If a temporary cover is used to protect an opening or hole, employer must ensure a warning sign or marking clearly indicating the nature of the hazard: (a) is posted near or fixed on the cover; and (b) is not removed unless another effective means of protection is immediately provided (OHS Code, Sec. 314(3)).

BC

A pit or other opening in a floor, walkway, roof or other area that's accessible and poses a danger to workers must be securely covered with a cover of adequate size and strength or guarded by fixed or movable guardrails, which must be identified as such and kept in place except when necessarily removed to work in the opening or pit (OHS Reg., Sec. 59(1)).

If compliance with the above requirement isn't practicable for a vehicle service pit, the area around the perimeter of the pit must be marked in a high visibility colour extending back at least 1 m (3.3 ft) from the edge of the pit, and the marking coating or material must provide a skid resistant surface (OHS Reg., Sec. 59(2)).

Subsection (1) doesn't apply to a trap door in a performance

stage or scenic unit that will be visible to the audience during a rehearsal or performance, provided that effective measures are taken to protect performers and other workers from injury (OHS Reg., Sec. 59(3)).

If a worker must enter an area that's not normally accessible and has dangerous openings, the openings must be guarded or personal fall protection must be used while the worker is in the area (OHS Reg., Sec. 59(4)).

MANITOBA

If an opening in a temporary floor can't be adequately protected by a guardrail, employer must ensure that: (a) the opening is completely covered with securely fastened planks or other materials capable of supporting any load that will be or is likely to be imposed on them; and (b) the covering is clearly, visibly and legibly marked to identify the hazard (WSH Regs., Sec. 30.5).

NEW BRUNSWICK

An employer and a contractor must each ensure that a temporary working floor has planks that are securely fastened and supported on each end 300 mm beyond the opening that is being covered (OHS General Reg., Sec. 104(1)(b)).

An owner of a place of employment, an employer and a contractor must each ensure that an opening on a work surface into which an employee may fall is guarded by either: (a) a guardrail on all exposed sides; or (b) a protective covering that: (i) completely covers the opening; (ii) is securely fastened; (iii) is made from material adequate to support all loads to which the covering may be subjected, and (iv) is marked as covering an opening, subject to the below exception (OHS General Reg., Sec. 111(1)).

If an opening is a hatchway, chute, pit or trap-door the owner

of the place of employment, an employer and the contractor must each ensure that openings are guarded by either: (a) guardrails on all exposed sides that are removable on no more than 2 sides and that are fixed on the other exposed sides; or (b) a flush hinged protective covering that: (i) completely covers the opening; (ii) is securely fastened; (iii) is of adequate strength; (iv) is marked as covering an opening; and (v) is adequately supported with attached railings so as to leave only one side of the opening exposed when the cover is open (OHS General Reg., Sec. 111(2)).

Despite subsections (1) and (2) above, if an opening leads to a stairway or ladder, an owner of a place of employment, an employer and a contractor must each ensure that the opening is guarded by guardrails on all exposed sides, except for the side leading to the entrance to the stairway or ladder (OHS General Reg., Sec. 111(3)).

If a protective covering is used over an opening but isn't in place, an owner of a place of employment, an employer and a contractor must each ensure that the opening is constantly attended by an employee or guarded by a guardrail on all exposed sides (OHS General Reg., Sec. 111(4)).

NEWFOUNDLAND

A hole or pit in a floor, roof, walkway or work area accessible to a worker must be securely covered and identified (OHS Regs., Sec. 30(2)).

NOVA SCOTIA

Employer must ensure that a guardrail used as a means of fall protection is installed: (a) around any uncovered opening in any surface; and (b) at the perimeter or other open side of a work area. No specific requirements for coverings (WHS Regs., Sec. 21.5).

Employer must ensure that temporary flooring used as a means of fall protection is able to withstand 4 times the maximum load likely to be on it and that it: (a) extends over the entire work area with the exception of any openings necessary for the carrying out of work; and (b) is securely fastened to prevent lateral and upward movement (WHS Regs., Sec. 21.6).

ONTARIO

For Construction Projects

One of the following precautions must be used to prevent a worker from falling through an opening on a work surface: 1. A guardrail system; or 2. A protective covering that: i. completely covers the opening; ii. is securely fastened; iii. is adequately identified as covering an opening; iv. is made from material adequate to support all loads to which the covering may be subjected; and v. is capable of supporting a live load of at least 2.4 kilonewtons per square metre without exceeding the allowable unit stresses for the material used (OHS Const. Project Regs., Sec. 26.3(2)).

For Industrial Establishments

A cover on an opening in a floor, roof or other surface must be: (a) secured in place; and (b) constructed to meet the structural requirements for loads due to the use of floors and roofs as set out in the *Building Code* (OHS Indust. Estab. Regs., Sec. 15).

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

A guardrail used as a means of fall protection must extend around any uncovered opening in a floor or other surface; no specifications for coverings (OHS Fall Protection Regs., Sec. 11.4).

QUÉBEC

Floors and walkways inside a building must be free from any opening capable of causing an accident, unless they're protected with a guardrail or cover capable of bearing a load of at least 2,4 kN/m² (OHS Reg., Secs. 14(4) and 15(7)).

SASKATCHEWAN

Employer, contractor or owner must ensure that any opening or hole in a floor, roof or other work surface into which a worker could step or fall is: (a) covered with a securely installed covering capable of supporting a load of 360 kilograms per square metre and that's provided with a warning sign or permanent marking clearly indicating the nature of the hazard; or (b) provided with a guardrail and a toeboard (OHS Regs., Sec. 124(1)).

If the covering or guardrail and toeboard mentioned in subsection (1) above or any part of it is removed for any reason, employer, contractor or owner must immediately provide an effective alternative means of protection (OHS Regs., Sec. 124(2)).

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AND NUNAVUT

Employer must ensure that any opening or hole in a floor, roof or other work surface into which a worker could step or fall is: (a) covered with a securely installed covering capable of supporting a load of 360 kilograms per square metre and that's provided with a warning sign or permanent marking clearly indicating the nature of the hazard; or (b) provided with a guardrail and a toeboard (OHS Regs., Sec. 130(1)).

If the covering or guardrail and toeboard mentioned in subsection (1) above or any part of it is removed for any reason, employer, contractor or owner must immediately provide an effective alternative means of protection (OHS Regs., Sec.

130(2)).