

Safe Floor Openings and Holes

How many times have you heard an employee ask, “how are 2 inch holes hazardous?” Were you ready with a response? If not, we’re here to explain. Several hazards exist even with the smallest of holes. They are a trip hazard, fall hazard and can damage equipment. Additionally, OSHA can issue a citation for each hole that they encounter during an inspection.

Understanding the Requirements

OSHA requires that all holes greater than 2 inches in diameter have a secure cover and be marked “HOLE,” or “GAP.” Additionally, the cover must be capable of supporting, without failure, at least twice the weight of the employees, equipment, and materials that may be imposed on the cover at any time. If the hole cover is located in an area with scissor lifts or other equipment, it must be capable of withstanding twice of that weight as well.

Hazards Associated with Open Holes and Gaps

- **Falling objects:** Tools and equipment can fall through the smallest of holes and hit someone on a lower level.
- **Falling through:** Some holes are large enough or can expand under pressure to fall through, causing an employee to fall from one floor to a lower level. This is especially prevalent in plywood flooring. Even if just a person’s leg falls through the hole, it can cause significant injury.
- **Tripping:** Construction sites are busy places. Employees might not be aware of holes in the walking surface, especially if they are handling materials. Tripping on a hole may cause broken bones, sprained ankles, etc.



How to Mitigate the Hazards

- Remember to mark the holes that you cover, so employees are aware of the hazard.
- Secure the covers. If you can move the cover away with your foot, it needs to be secured.
- Have employees install hole covers as they create the holes. This saves time and effort.

Adequate Hole Cover



Deficient Hole Cover



Remember to replace any covers that appear to be damaged or ineffective.

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