

Floor Holes and Covers

About 8 minutes to deliver

The hazard that gets built in the morning and kills someone in the afternoon, and what makes a cover a cover rather than a piece of plywood.

A hole is a gap two inches or more in its least dimension in a floor, roof or other walking surface. Under 1926.501(b)(4) you have to be protected from falling through one — and separately from tripping into or stepping into one. Both, not either.

WHAT COUNTS AS A COVER

1926.502(i) is specific, and this is where most sites fall short:

- Twice the weight of the people, equipment and materials that could be on it at once. In a roadway or a vehicle aisle, twice the maximum axle load of the largest vehicle that could cross it.
- Secured so wind, equipment or a boot cannot shift it. Not laid on. Fixed.
- Colour coded, or marked "HOLE" or "COVER." A blank sheet of plywood on a slab is not a cover — it is something somebody will pick up and use for formwork at four o'clock.

A scrap of OSB over a shaft, unfixed and unmarked, meets none of these and is the single most common version of this hazard on a jobsite.

SKYLIGHTS

A skylight is a hole with something breakable over it. The panel is weatherproofing — it is not designed to hold a person and it will not. Every year people step or sit on one and go straight through. Screen it, rail it, or tie off before you go near it.

THE HABITS

- Cut it, cover it. Not later. The person who cuts the hole owns it until it is covered or railed.
- Never move a cover and walk away, not even for a minute, not even to look. If it has to come off, somebody stands there or it gets railed.
- Put it back exactly, secured and marked, before you leave the area.
- Walk the floor at the end of the shift, especially after other trades have been through. Covers migrate.
- Report an unmarked one immediately rather than stepping round it. The next person will not see it.

ASK THE CREW

- Are there holes on this floor right now, and is every cover secured and marked?
- Who covers a hole they cut — the person who cut it, or whoever notices later?
- Are there skylights above or below where we are working today?

29 CFR 1926.501 · 29 CFR 1926.502

This is a toolbox talk, not a course. It is general awareness on one topic — not site-specific, not a hazard assessment, and not a substitute for assessment of your workplace by a competent person, your written programs, or manufacturers' instructions. It does not by itself satisfy any OSHA training requirement. Regulations change; verify against the current standard. Whoever delivers it is responsible for deciding it is suitable and sufficient for the work. Where a talk covers first aid, resuscitation, or mental health it is general safety information, not medical advice, not a substitute for professional medical care or certified emergency-response training, and it confers no certification — in an emergency, call 911. Free to print and use, as is, with no warranty of any kind. Migna Safety Solutions · training.mignasafety.com

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ATTENDANCE RECORD

Floor Holes and Covers

About 8 minutes to deliver · 29 CFR 1926.501 · 29 CFR 1926.502

Date

Job / site

Delivered by

Company

#	Print name	Signature	Date
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I delivered this talk and determined it was suitable for this crew and this work.

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