

Overview

OSHA has very specific rules on guarding floor and wall openings and holes, to protect employees from falling and injuring themselves, and to prevent accidental drops of tools or equipment to injure workers below.

Types of openings

OSHA addresses the following types of openings and holes:

Floor holes are openings less than 12 inches but more than 1 inch in its least dimension, in any floor, platform, pavement or yard, through which materials but not persons may fall.

Floor openings are openings which measure 12 inches or more in its least dimension, in any floor, platform, pavement, or yard, through which persons may fall.

Platforms are working spaces for persons which are elevated 4 feet or more above the surrounding floor or ground.

Loading docks are platforms.

Wall holes are openings less than 30 inches but more than 1 inch high, or unrestricted width, in any wall or partition.

Wall openings are at least 30 inches high and 18 inches wide, in any wall or partition, through which persons may fall.

Standard railings for floor openings must consist of a top rail, midrail, and posts having a vertical height of 42 inches from the upper surface of the platform, runway, or ramp. Mid rail height is 21 inches.

A standard toeboard is 4 inches nominal in vertical height, with not more than 1/4 inch clearance above the floor level.

Open-sided floors, platforms, loading docks, and runways more than 4 feet above floor or ground level are to be protected on open sides by a standard railing.



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