

THE OSHA 10-HOUR GENERAL INDUSTRY COURSE  
**Walking Working Surfaces**

# Walking – Working Surfaces

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One of the biggest safety concerns related to walking and working surfaces is fall prevention. Falls cause the majority of general industry accidents and are responsible for many of the accidental deaths. More fatalities result from falls than any other cause, except for motor vehicle accidents!



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## OSHA's General Requirements

OSHA's general requirements are designed to help keep your workplace safe and free of clutter. They address four different areas:

- Housekeeping
- Aisles and Passageways
- Covers and Guardrails
- Floor Loading

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### OSHA's General Requirements (cont'd)

- Housekeeping:
  - Workplaces must be kept clean, orderly, and sanitary
  - Workroom floors must be kept as clean and dry as possible
- Aisles and Passageways:
  - Aisles and passageways must be kept clear and any obstructions that could cause a hazard must be removed
  - Permanent aisles and passageways must be clearly marked
  - Aisles must be sufficiently wide where mechanical handling equipment is used



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### OSHA's General Requirements (cont'd)

- Covers and Guardrails:
  - Covers and/or guardrails must be provided to protect workers from the hazards of open pits, tanks, vats, ditches, etc.
- Floor Loading:
  - Load ratings must be marked on plates and be clearly posted
  - The load rating limit must never be exceeded



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## Hazards and Prevention Methods

There are several different kinds of hazards you might encounter on walking and working surfaces in the workplace. Various methods exist for guarding against each one and preventing accidents and falls.

The most common methods of guarding walking and working surfaces are:


- Standard railings
- Standard toeboards

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### Hazards and Prevention Methods (cont'd)

- A standard railing consists of a top rail, mid rail, and posts. If items could fall to a work surface below, a toeboard is also required.



standard railing should measure 42 inches from the upper surface of the top rail to

**Mid Rail:** A standard railing should include a mid rail located 21 inches above floor level.

**Toeboard:** Should be 4 inches high, with no more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch clearance above the floor.

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## Guarding Surface Hazards

- Some of the most common walking – working surface hazards are:
  - Floor openings
  - Floor holes
  - Wall openings
  - Open-sided floors, platforms, walkways, and runways



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## Guarding Surface Hazards (cont'd)

### Floor Openings

- Floor openings are a common hazard. If they are not properly guarded, workers or equipment could fall through them, potentially causing serious injury or even death. There are three different kinds of floor openings:
  - Typical floor opening
  - Stairway floor opening
  - Ladderway floor opening

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## Guarding Surface Hazards (cont'd)

### Floor Openings

- **Typical floor openings:** An opening measuring 12 inches or more in its least dimension, located in a floor, platform, pavement, or yard. To be properly guarded, a floor opening should have both a standard railing and a standard toeboard.



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## Guarding Surface Hazards (cont'd)

### Floor Openings

- **Stairway floor openings:** Occur when there is a stairway that descends below the floor level. Stairway floor openings must be guarded by a standard railing on all exposed sides, except at the entrance.



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## Guarding Surface Hazards (cont'd)

### Floor Openings

- **Ladderway floor openings:** Occur when a ladder descends below floor level. Ladderway floor openings must be guarded with a standard railing and toeboard on all exposed sides, except the entrance.



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## Guarding Surface Hazards (cont'd)

### Floor Holes

- A floor hole is an opening in the floor, platform, pavement, or yard measuring less than 12 inches but more than 1 inch in its least dimension, through which materials could fall.
- Every floor hole that is a potential hazard must be protected by either a standard railing with toeboard or a cover.



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## Guarding Surface Hazards (cont'd)

### Wall Openings

- Wall openings can also present a hazard in the workplace. Any wall opening at least 30 inches high and 18 inches wide from which there is a drop of more than 4 feet must be guarded with a standard railing and toeboard.



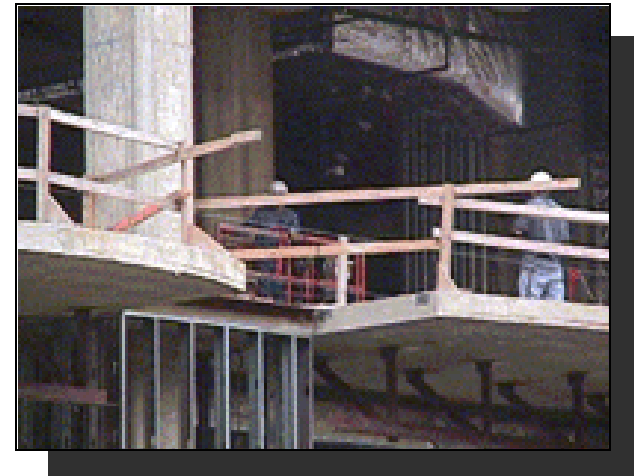
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## Guarding Surface Hazards (cont'd)

### Open-Sided Floors, Platforms, & Walkways

- Open-sided floors or platforms 4 feet or more above the adjacent floor or ground level must be guarded by a standard railing on all open sides, except where there is an entrance to a ramp, stairway, or ladder.
- Regardless of height, a standard toeboard must also be used to guard open-sided floors, platforms, walkways, and runways when they are located above or adjacent to dangerous equipment, pickling or galvanizing tanks, degreasing units, or similar hazards.



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## Spill Hazards

Spills occurring on the working surface can be just as dangerous as unmarked openings.

If a spill occurs, it should:

- Be marked or blocked off as soon as it occurs and should remain marked until the spill has been properly cleaned up
- Cleaning up a spill should commence immediately after the spill has been marked



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## Slipping and Tripping Hazards



- The proper footwear must be worn in the work area to reduce the risk of slipping or tripping over hazards.
- Open-toed shoes, such as sandals, may be comfortable to wear, but they provide little to no protection in the workplace. To prevent injury, wear close-toed shoes at all times.

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## Additional Information

- Additional information on Walking – Working Surfaces topics can be found in the Scaffolds and Stairways and Ladders modules.