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GUARDRAILS, HANDRAILS & COVERS

No matter what type of construction work you are in you see guardrails, handrails and covers on a regular basis. All three are used to prevent us from falling into a hole, off the edge of a floor or down a stairway.

Falls are a leading cause of injuries and deaths in the construction industry. Guardrails, handrails, and covers are designed to reduce those statistics, and if it is your life that is involved, that is important, right?

A guardrail is used to protect a floor opening or open sided floor. They can be found around elevator shafts, pits, duct chases, platforms, etc.

Guardrails must be capable of withstanding, without failure, a force of at least 200 pounds applied in any outward or downward direction. A typical guardrail consists of a smooth surfaced top rail, made of 2"x4" stock, approximately 42" above the walking or working level, with a 1"x6" mid-rail, and a toe board of any substantial material that is a minimum of 4" high.

2"x4" posts must be located no more than 8' apart. Metal and/or pipe may also be used for guardrails as long as minimum standards are met.

Covers are another method used to protect us from falling into openings in floors, roofs, etc. They must be capable of supporting, without failure, the maximum intended load and be secured to prevent accidental displacement.

Color code the cover or mark it with 'hole' or 'cover' to provide a warning of the hazard. A cover located in a roadway or vehicular aisle must be capable of supporting at least twice the maximum axle load of the largest vehicle expected to cross over it.

As with any safety device, take the time to inspect it before depending on it. Never lean on a guardrail unless you are sure it is strong enough to hold you.

Avoid floor hole covers; walk around them; the person who installed it may not have secured it properly.

When removing a hole cover, do not step forward or backward into the hole! A number of construction workers have been injured and some even killed walking into a hole they just uncovered!

Railings and covers are Lifesavers! Guard it or cover it! The life you save may be your own