

Toolbox talks

Manholes, slab openings and shaft covers

Background information:

Serious consequences can result from persons falling through openings in floors and into voids such as inspection chambers, manholes, floors below etc. Morgan Sindall has a mandatory instruction regarding working around man holes, slab opening and shaft covers, this is detailed below.

Hazards:

- Falling through openings
- Stumbling, tripping
- Dropping objects and materials through openings onto persons below
- Vehicles driving into opening, manholes etc.

Health and safety points:

- Manholes and other openings must be designed out where practicable
- Designers must consider integral, lockable permanent covers, which eliminate the need for temporary covers at any stage of construction.

Where permanent lockable covers are not possible, a site specific risk assessment should indicate minimum standards of control as follows:

- Double guard rails and toe boards are required around the opening.
- At times when it is not practicable for guard rails to be employed, temporary covers made of either steel or high grade 25mm thick plywood must be used in accordance with the following criteria:
- High grade 25mm thick plywood which positively locate at least 100mm into the opening on all sides and overlap the opening edges by at least 150mm should be employed. These covers are suitable for pedestrian traffic only. Maximum opening size must not exceed 1100mm x 900mm in either dimension.
- Steel may be used for openings up to 900mm x 900mm as per drawings shown on the guidance note
- Temporary covers will be fitted with a plastic sign “Danger Opening Below” and have the edges marked to indicate a tripping hazard
- All temporary covers must be securely fixed down wherever possible. If this is not possible then timbers batons, etc must be used on the underside to stop movement.

A permit to enter system is required for all areas in and around openings in slabs over deep shafts and rooms. The ‘permit’ area should be clearly delineated.

All temporary covers and edge protection should be inspected at least once weekly and after severe weather or other changes in the working conditions. A record should be kept of such inspections using a register or similar approved document.

Question time:

- Q What is the first type of protection to be considered when working around open man holes?
- Q What sign should be placed on the cover?

Have you got any questions?

Record questions on the attendance sheet.

Safety reminder:

The same rules and common sense should be applied when working on the ground around open man holes, slab opening and shaft covers as working at height off the ground!

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