Toolbox Talks – Plywood Covers on Floor Openings

Safety covering a floor opening with a piece of plywood requires more than just laying the material over a hole, or even nailing it down.

Total safety on the job means a total job of eliminating a hazard. Half a job, inadequate or incomplete jobs of covering hole hazards can only result in half, inadequate, or incomplete accident prevention.

A recent accident illustrates the point. A carpenter on a floor above called down to a laborer to hand him a sheet of plywood. The laborer walked over to the sheet lying on the floor, picked it up, took a step or two forward in the act of standing the plywood up, and he went sailing right down through a hole in the floor. Why did it happen?

Although originally nailed down with 8d concrete nails, a small piece of plywood over the hole wasn’t large enough to overlap it adequately. Between the traffic walking over it and the springing of the plywood, the nails eventually loosened.

The plywood over the hole wasn’t marked in any way. There was no warning of any kind on it. The man mistook it for a piece of loose material lying on the floor.

The man wasn’t told about it. He wasn’t made aware of the fact that the covering of floor openings was a job procedure calculated to prevent accidents. Neither was he told that he must maintain and report such danger spots.

Anything less than total safety is no safety at all. The total safety attitude must be kept in mind when floor openings are being covered.
1. The hole should be covered securely with a cover big enough, and rigid enough, to prevent failure.
2. It should be marked with a danger warning.

Every employee on the job should be warned about it.
Our safety evaluations, reports and recommendations are made solely to assist your organization in reducing hazards and the potential of hazards and accidents. These recommendations were developed from conditions observed and information provided at the time of our visit. They do not attempt to identify every possible loss potential, hazard or risk, nor do they guarantee that workplace accidents will be prevented. These safety evaluations, reports and recommendations are not a substitute for ongoing, well-researched internal safety and risk management programs. This report does not warrant that the property inspected and its operations are compliant with any law, rule or regulation.

United Heartland is the marketing name for United Wisconsin Insurance Company, a member of AF Group. All policies are underwritten by a licensed insurer subsidiary of AF Group.