



Protection of holes and voids on flat roofs

Introduction

Holes and voids in flat roofs, such as rooflights, roof access openings, service and ventilation chambers, are a common occurrence during the construction phase. During construction, such holes and voids will require temporary protection to prevent persons and/or materials from falling through.



As this type of protection is only temporary (*until the permanent structure or covering has been installed*), it will be subject to temporary works arrangements. This is to ensure that any temporary covering

is capable of providing the correct level of safety provision that it is being used for and that it is subject to regular inspection and maintenance to ensure the reliability of the cover until the permanent structure or covering has been installed.



Whilst large intended voids are protected with purposely designed edge protection systems or safety decking systems during the construction phase, it has become apparent that smaller holes and voids that

are not subject to vehicle or plant movement, are being covered using other means like timber secured either to a frame, the structure or just weighted down.

This health and safety guidance sheet has been developed to provide guidance on the steps that should be considered when planning to temporarily cover any holes and voids in this manner.

Planning

Before any roof work begins, a meeting should be held between the Principal Contractor and roofing contractor to ensure that any holes and voids on the building where the permanent structure or covering cannot be installed are minimised, and

protected. A plan should be drawn up that provides the location of the hole and voids and the agreed protection measures. Contractors working on the roof should be provided with this information to ensure they are also aware of the location and protection measures for each of the holes and voids. Any temporary protection measures relating to holes and voids must be continually inspected in line with the site's temporary works procedure by an appropriate person who is competent to do so, to verify that the system used to protect the hole or void, has been correctly designed, constructed, and installed in accordance with the systems requirements or design and that the condition of the protection has not deteriorated.



System designed cover

Plywood covers

The following requirements should also be observed when plywood is used to temporarily cover a hole or void:

- The plywood must be in good condition and carefully checked to ensure it is structurally sound and with no damage or delamination.
- The grade and thickness of plywood should be ascertained by a competent person with the correct level of skills, knowledge, and experience.



Plywood coverings over a service penetration through a flat roof

- Any framework required to support the temporary plywood cover should be designed by a competent person with the correct skills, knowledge, and experience.
- Any fixings required to attach the plywood cover, or any supporting structure that may be needed, should be designed by a competent person with the correct level of skills, knowledge, and experience.
- The plywood should be clearly identifiable as a hole cover with signage and must not present a trip hazard.

- A clear inspection and maintenance procedure should be documented including the reporting of any damage identified and communicated to any operatives that work, visit, or pass the plywood temporary cover.

Maintenance of plywood covers



Example of a poorly covered hole

Plywood coverings can be damaged or become delaminated due to weathering—fixings loosen or warning paints fade and as such a regular inspection of all hole and void covers should be undertaken by the main contractor in line with their temporary works procedure. The roofing contractor should ensure that any hole or void protection covers that have been installed within their work area have a visual inspection before any works take place and if any concerns are noted these must be recorded with the main contractor to ensure that any remedial works required are undertaken.

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