

Floor Holes: Before the Cover Comes Off

Todd Jerome Jenkins | v1.0 | October 12, 2026 | Discussion + field verification

Why this matters

A covered opening becomes an active exposure as soon as removal starts. Plan the interval between removing and restoring protection.

Objective: Keep people protected throughout a hole-cover removal and restoration.

Key hazards or failure points

Unexpected opening; unprotected remover; falling tools; passing crews; unsecured replacement.

Practical controls

- Identify the opening, purpose and authorized removal sequence. Arrange required fall and falling-object protection before loosening the cover.
- Keep other workers out of the affected area above and below. Coordinate the work with crews using nearby routes.
- Assign restoration and release to named people. Use the approved cover arrangement and applicable load, securement and identification criteria.

Verify It in the Field

From protected access, match the opening identifier to the plan. Confirm replacement materials and the remover's protection are ready.

Ask who controls access during the uncovered stage. Verify actual barriers and protection; a caution sign alone is not fall protection.

Before reopening, have the responsible person verify restored protection against its documented criteria. Do not stand on an unknown cover to test it.

Stop and reassess

Hold removal for missing protection or unclear ownership. Stop affected access if the cover moves, the opening changes or the handoff is interrupted; reverify before release.

Ask the crew

1. Who is protected before removal starts?
2. Who could approach from another direction?
3. What evidence permits reopening?

Use this HOP tool — Pre-job briefing: Before touching the cover, talk through removal, an interruption and restoration. Each person names their role and the protection needed first. Identify one handoff that could leave the opening unattended, then resolve who retains control until the next person accepts it.

Sources: OSHA 1926.501, 1926.502; DOE Vol. 2, pp. 34–37. HOP concepts adapted from DOE-HDBK-1028-2009, Vol. 2 (June 2009). No claim to original U.S. Government work; no government endorsement implied.

Free next step: JHA/JSA planning and field-verification worksheet

Expanded guidance and separate forms: toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/floor-holes-cover-removal