

Temporary Guardrails: Protect the Removal Window

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Why this matters

A delivery may need an opening in a guardrail. The person removing it and everyone approaching the edge need protection during that change.

Objective: Verify protection before a guardrail section is removed.

Key hazards or failure points

Exposed edge; leaning to receive loads; premature removal; delayed replacement; another crew entering.

Practical controls

- Plan the smallest necessary opening and its duration. Select compliant protection for the actual activity before removal starts.
- Coordinate the delivery and keep uninvolved people away. Protect installers and receivers through every stage; do not attach fall arrest to guardrails.
- Assign who reinstalls the section and who releases the area. Keep the restriction effective if the delivery is delayed.

Verify It in the Field

From a protected position, identify the exact section, receiving position and removal sequence. Compare them with the authorized method.

Verify the selected protection is usable at that position, including anchorage, clearance and rescue where fall arrest is used.

After restoration, have the designated person compare connections and complete protection with the approved arrangement. Do not lean against it as a strength test.

Stop and reassess

Hold for an unexpected delivery position, unavailable protection, loose rail or uncertain release. Remain protected and obtain correction before restarting.

Ask the crew

1. Who removes the rail, and how are they protected?
2. What happens if the delivery stops?
3. Who verifies the restored opening?

Use this HOP tool — Pre-job briefing: Rehearse the first connection removed and the last connection restored without touching the rail. Ask each role what must be verified before acting. Add a delayed-delivery scenario and agree who keeps the area controlled until protection is restored and released.

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/temporary-guardrail-removal