

# SAFETY TALK

## [guardrails]

Guardrails are a common and convenient means of fall protection. They can be used not only along the open edges of floors and roofs but also on formworks, scaffolds and other working surfaces.

Guardrails can readily protect openings in floors and flat roofs. Guardrails should be installed as close to the open edge as possible. They have to be able to withstand whatever loads are likely to be applied against them.

A proper guardrail should consist of:

- A top rail between 900 mm and 1.07 metres high.
- A mid-rail.
- A toeboard that is 127 mm high and not more than 6 mm off the floor.

For maximum resistance to sideways force, the top rail of wooden guardrails should lay flat and withstand 675N in any direction.

Guardrails must be made of wood, metal pipe, angle iron or wire rope. Well-anchored support posts (no more than eight feet apart along the entire length of the guardrail, unless specified in the *Regulation*) are essential. Vertical shoring jacks, screw-clamp posts, clamp binding posts or posts that fit into sleeves cast right in the slab can be used.

Guardrails may have to be removed to land material or make installations along floor or roof edges. When doing so, the open edge should be roped off and marked with warning signs. It should never be left unguarded. All workers less than 3 metres from the opening must use an alternative fall-protection system. The guardrail must be replaced before leaving the area.

A competent person must inspect all guardrails before each shift.

Guardrails are the best method of protecting workers around openings in floors and roofs. Sometimes, however, they're not practical. In such cases, securely fastened covers made of planks, plywood or steel plates are used instead.

**Remember:** There's always a danger that someone will pick up the plywood to use it somewhere else. Therefore, covers should be clearly identified in bright paint with warning signs.

**DO NOT REMOVE.  
DANGER!  
HOLE IN FLOOR.**

*[Instructor to review types of guardrails used on site. Ask your crew to identify any other areas where guardrails should be installed.]*

In New Brunswick, the law on guardrails can be found in *Regulation 91-191* under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.