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ACCESS PLATFORM DECKING SYSTEMS UPPER FLOOR ACCESS HATCHES FOR SUPERVISORS

What is the risk?

Life changing injuries have been experienced by site workers due to inadequate and unplanned access arrangements on the upper floors of construction sites. Without planning, operatives often make “DIY” hatches which make the floor appear to be complete, but when someone steps on the cut out area, the floor gives way and the worker falls to the level below.

What is needed?

Early consideration of access hatch requirements is required so Access Hatches that have been designed and tested by the manufacturer can be used. This will allow for a safe workplace, meeting the requirements of the Work at Height Regulations. Edge Protection may be needed if the Access Hatch is to remain open and the void left is large enough for an operative to fall through.

Types of Access Hatch

Hatch Type	Suitable for	Description
Materials	Materials only	Small hatch that doesn't allow an operative to fall through the floor if left open
Personnel	Personnel only	Large hatch which allows ladders to be pushed through and allow access and egress of personnel only. Should not be left open and isn't designed for materials to be passed through without further control measures.
Integrated	Materials and personnel	Incorporates a number of small hatches within a large hatch to allow for personnel and materials to pass through. Different hatches / combinations of hatches are opened dependent upon the intended use.

Good and bad practice...

Good practice - the correct type of access hatch has been installed and is being used safely.



Bad practice - a section of floor has been removed and a temporary / sacrificial joist has been installed in an attempt to support the weakened floor.



5 KEY POINTS:

1. Give early consideration to access hatches
2. Only use access hatches designed and tested by the manufacturer
3. Use edge protection where required
4. Understand the risks involved
5. Stop the work if you feel anything is unsafe and report to the Site Manager

Useful references:

- FASET APD-03 Upper Floor Access Hatches
- FASET Access Platform Decking Guidance Note
- The Work at Height Regulations 2005

Considerations for SUPERVISORS

- Satisfy yourself that you are working in the correct area and that the upper-floor is safe to work on, including suitable Access Hatch provision;
- Review the work activities periodically and ensure that the chosen control measures remain suitable so that no person is put at risk;
- Hold discussions with your work teams and highlight any specific hazards associated with their work;
- Ensure that all control measures have been communicated, are in place and are being maintained;
- Stop the work immediately if any of the control measures are felt to be insufficient / not appropriate or if it is found that the access hatch has been tampered with, and report to the Site Manager.

