

# >> TOOLBOX TALK – Temporary Stairs and Handrails

Temporary stairs are often used on construction sites as a placeholder for permanent stairways to help workers access various points of a site. Temporary handrails are also used on sites, typically to protect workers from falling from heights. If not properly installed, temporary stairs and handrails can result in falls, serious injuries, and tragedies on a worksite.

## What the legislation says . . .

### For temporary stairs:

#### The Newfoundland and Labrador Occupational Health and Safety Regulations:

- **Section 67(d)** states, 'floors, platforms, stairs and walkways used by workers are kept in a state of good repair and free of hazards'.
- **Section 377(5)** states, 'A stairway comprised, at a minimum, of framing, treads, midrail and a handrail shall be provided to each floor level before construction of the next floor or deck surface is undertaken, and the treads on the stairway shall not create a tripping or slipping hazard.'
- **Section 403** states, 'Stairways, complete with handrails, shall be left intact until access to the level served by the stairway is no longer required.'

### For temporary handrails:

#### The Newfoundland and Labrador Occupational Health and Safety Regulations Section 460 states:

- (1) A flight of stairs with more than 4 risers shall be equipped with handrails as follows:
- (a) on all open sides of stairway;
  - (b) on one side of an enclosed stairway 1.12 metres in width; and
  - (c) on both sides of enclosed stairways over 1.12 metres wide.
- (2) The height of the upper surface of a stair rail from and perpendicular to the forward edge of the tread shall be not less than 91.44 centimetres and not more than 1.07 metres.

## Temporary Stairway Safety Tips:

- Upon entering the site, make sure the temporary stairs provide a safe way to enter/ exit work areas located above or below ground level.
- Inspect the temporary stairs, headers, footers, and handrails, to ensure they are in proper condition. Cracked or missing stringers, steps, and grooves may reduce the strength of the structure causing it to collapse when heavy weights are applied. A buildup of snow or ice on the stairs can also cause slips and falls.
- Ensure the stairs are properly secured at the header and the base and that it is not installed over a floor opening.
- If you are not 100% sure of the stairway's condition, or it has a warning sticker on it, DO NOT USE IT and check with your employer/supervisor to find an alternative access way.
- Never tamper with or make any changes to a temporary stairway unless you are qualified and permitted, by your supervisor, to do so.

## Temporary Handrail Safety Tips:

- Install a proper handrail as defined by OH&S regulations as soon as temporary stairs are installed.
- Use clean Occupational Health and Safety-approved lumber that is free of cracks and splits to avoid injuries to the hand.
- Use adequate size and spacing of fasteners to ensure safety and longevity of handrail.
- Don't hang foreign material/tools off of handrails (ex. Caulking guns, clothing, tool belts, etc.).

Content adapted for NLCSA with permission from Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association.

**Complete and attach Toolbox Meeting Form and process as per company policy.**



**TOOLBOX MEETING FORM**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Project: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_ No. in Crew: \_\_\_\_\_ No. Attending: \_\_\_\_\_

**Review Last Meeting:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

	<b>Names of Attendees (Signature Required)</b>
<b>Topics Discussed (policies, practices, procedures, hazard assessment):</b>	
<b>Suggestions Offered:</b>	
<b>Action(s) to be Taken:</b>	
<b>Injuries/Accidents Reviewed:</b>	

**Supervisor's Remarks:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_