



Improving Temporary Stairs and Handrails

Temporary stairs are often used before the placement of permanent stairs. Temporary handrails are also used on sites typically to protect workers from falling from heights. If these stairs and handrails are improperly installed, or poorly designed they can result in falls, serious injuries or even death.

Common Problems with Temporary Stairs

- improperly secured at the header and the base not in good condition
- too long or short to attach to the floor correctly
- installed at an improper location
- too narrow
- A build up of debris, mud, snow or ice on the stairs may cause workers to slip and fall

Temporary Stairs Legislation

- Floors, platforms, stairs, and walkways must be kept in a state of good repair and free of hazards (NL OHS Regulation S. 67 (d))
- A stairway comprised, at a minimum, of framing, treads, mid-rail and a handrail shall be provided to each floor level before construction of the next floor level or deck surface is undertaken, and the treads on the stairway shall not create a tripping hazard (NL OHS Regulation s. 377 (5)).
- Stairways, completed with handrails, shall be left intact until access to the level served by the stairway is no longer required (NL OHS Regulation s. 403)

Temporary Handrail Legislation

NL OHS Regulation s.460 says:

A flight of stairs with more than 4 risers must be equipped with handrails on all open sides of the stairway; on one side of an enclosed stairway 1.12m

in width; and on both sides of an enclosed stairway over 1.12m wide

- The height of the upper surface of a stairs rail from and perpendicular to the forward edge of the tread shall not be less than 91.44cm and not more than 1.07m

Temporary Stairway Safety Tips

- Ensure 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 stairways condition, or it has a warning sticker on it, DO NOT USE IT.
- Never tamper with or make any changes to a temporary stairway unless you are qualified and permitted to do so.

Temporary Handrail Safety Tips

- Install a proper handrail as defined by OHS regulations as soon as temporary stairs are installed.
- Use clean lumber that is free of cracks and splits
- Use adequate size and spacing of fasteners to ensure safety and longevity of the handrail
- Don't hang foreign material/tools off handrails