



June 8 — Don't Assume the Next Person Will See It

While walking around looking at jobs on a dryer and I found by the stairs a contractor had removed a pipe leaving a hole in the floor about 10"-12" in diameter that someone could have stepped off the stairs and not seen it and fall into the hole.

I stood by the area keeping others away and called the contractor about the problem and they said they would have someone come to cover it. So, I stayed there until they showed up to cover it.

Most floor openings aren't dangerous because they're large.

They're dangerous because someone doesn't see them.

While walking through a Dryer, an employee noticed that a contractor had removed a pipe near a stairway, leaving an opening in the floor approximately 10 to 12 inches in diameter. The location of the opening created a particular concern. Someone coming down the stairs could easily focus on where they were going, miss the hole entirely, and step directly into it.

Recognizing the risk, the employee immediately contacted the contractor and explained the situation. The contractor agreed to send someone to cover the opening. Instead of assuming the issue would be addressed, the employee remained at the location, keeping others away from the hazard until the opening was properly covered.

Many workplace injuries occur not because a hazard is difficult to identify, but because it is encountered at the wrong moment. A small opening in the floor may seem insignificant until someone is carrying materials, talking with a coworker, checking paperwork, or simply focused on navigating a stairway. When attention is directed elsewhere, even an obvious hazard can go unnoticed.

This observation also highlights the importance of follow-through. Reporting a hazard is important, but ensuring people remain protected until corrective actions are completed can be just as important. In this case, the employee understood that the risk still existed until the opening was covered and prevented anyone from being exposed in the meantime.

That's not just hazard recognition—it's ownership.

Hazards

- Trips and falls
- Foot and ankle injuries
- Loss of balance near stairways
- Distractions while walking
- Unprotected floor openings

Words of Wisdom

A hazard doesn't stop being a hazard simply because someone has been notified. When immediate exposure exists, temporary controls may be necessary until a permanent solution is in place.

Pause and Think

- What hazards in your area could be easy to overlook during routine work?
- Have you ever reported a hazard and assumed someone else would take care of it?
- What temporary controls can be used while waiting for a hazard to be corrected?
- Why are stairways and walking surfaces common locations for injuries?
- What could have happened if the employee had left the area before the opening was covered?

Closing Thought

Finding a hazard is important. Staying engaged until it's controlled is what prevents injuries.