

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.

The Legislation

For temporary stairs, section 16-4 of the Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2020 states that a contractor or owner shall ensure that:

- (a) the widths of treads, the depths of treads and the vertical distances between treads are uniform throughout the length of any stairway and that each tread is level; and
- (b) any stairs installed on or after the day on which this section comes into force, including temporary stairs, are at least 600 millimetres wide.

For temporary handrails, section 9-10(1) of the Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2020 states that an employer, contractor or owner shall ensure that a stairway with five or more treads:

- (a) is equipped with a handrail that:
 - (i) extends the entire length of the stairway
 - (ii) is adequately secured to the structure
 - (iii) is installed on the stairway at a height of between 800 and 920 millimetres above the front edge of the treads; and
 - (iv) is strong enough to support a worker who falls on the stair way; and
- (b) on an open side, is equipped with both a handrail and intermediate rail or equivalent safeguard.

(2) Where a handrail is required for a temporary stairway to which subsection (1) applies, an employer, contractor or owner shall ensure that the handrail is constructed of at least 38 by 89 millimetres construction grade lumber, or material of equivalent strength, and is supported by posts that are not more than 3 metres apart.

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 its 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
- Good practice is to ensure handrail has between 38 millimetres (1 1/2") to 50 millimetres (2") clearance from wall or obstruction so proper grip is obtained
- Don't hang foreign material/tools off of handrails (ex. Caulking guns, clothing, tool belts, etc.)

SCSA Guide to OHS Legislation App



Tool Box Talk

When accidents and incidents happen on the jobsite, we are always quick to point the finger at lack of training, not following practices or procedures, or even improper supervision. The idea that the hazards and dangers associated with the job were not properly communicated to all of the workers is often missed.

Tool Box Talks can go by many names, and although formats may vary, these meetings all serve one purpose: to inform employees and contract workers. Tool Box Talks are short, informal, meetings between management and the workers on a jobsite. The goal of these meetings is to reinforce current safe job procedures, inform workers of new and/or relevant procedures, review recent safety violations/incidents, and ensure workers are up-to-date on the information required to complete their work safely.

Always use a Tool Box Talk form to record the meeting topic, date, who was in attendance, and any follow-up actions to be taken. Not only do these forms help with consistency of record keeping, but they also ensure that nothing is missed. At the end of the meeting have management sign off on the form.

One of the most important aspects of a Tool Box Talk is giving workers an opportunity to voice their concerns and ask questions. All employees have a right to participate in health and safety as it relates to their work and it is the supervisor or manager's responsibility to create an environment for them to do so. Once the meeting is over, and the form is filled out, it should be filed with other documented Tool Box Talks.

Remember that Tool Box Talks are short and informal, they are not meant to be intimidating. Use the opportunity to have fun and stay on top of what is necessary to keep safety culture a strong part of the business.

For a full listing of Tool Box Talk topics, visit: www.scsaonline.ca/resources/tool-box-talks

For a copy of the Tool Box Talk form, visit: www.scsaonline.ca/pdf/Tool_Box_Meeting.pdf

About the Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association

The Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association (SCSA) is an industry-funded, membership-based, nonprofit organization that provides cost-effective, accessible safety training and advice to employers and employees in the construction industry throughout the province to reduce the human and financial losses associated with injuries. Registered March 20, 1995, the SCSA is, and has been since inception, committed to injury prevention. Serving almost 10,000 member companies with business offices in both Regina and Saskatoon, the major business units of the association are Advisory Services, Business Development, Corporate Services, Program Services and Training. The mission of the SCSA is constructing safety leadership in Saskatchewan and the vision is to create the safest construction environment in Canada.