

Tool Box Talk

Temporary Stairs & Handrails

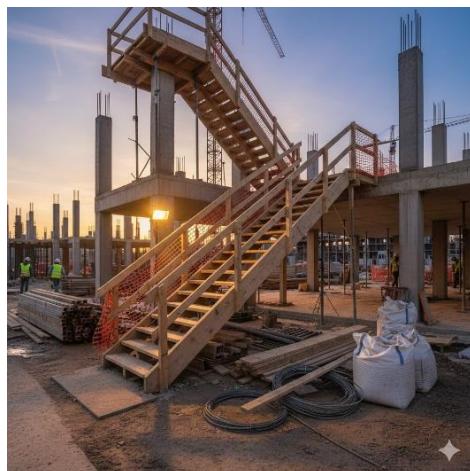
Temporary stairs are often used on construction sites as a placeholder for permanent stairways to help workers access various points of a site.

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.

Temporary Stairway Safe Work Practices

- Treads in a staircase must have a uniform run and rise throughout the length of the stairway.
- Staircase width is at least 600 mm (24 inches).
- Ensure 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 and/or steps may reduce the strength of the structure and cause 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.
- If you are not 100% sure of the stairs' condition, or if it has a warning tape or sticker on it, DO NOT USE IT. Check with your employer/supervisor to find alternative access.
- 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 Safe Work Practices

- Install a proper handrail as soon as temporary stairs are installed, when there are 5 treads or more.
- Ensure it is strong enough to support a worker who may fall into it.
- Build with at least 38 mm x 89 mm (2" x 4") construction-grade lumber or a material of equivalent strength that is free of cracks and splits to avoid hand injuries.
- Use adequate size and spacing of fasteners to ensure the safety and longevity of the handrail.
- Space support posts no more than 3 metres (approx. 10 ft) apart.
- Install between 800 mm and 920 mm (31.5" to 36") above the front edge of the treads.
- Good practice is to ensure the handrail has between 38 millimetres (1.5") and 50 mm (2") clearance from the wall or obstruction so proper grip is obtained.
- Don't hang foreign material/tools off of handrails (e.g., caulking guns, clothing, tool belts, etc.)
- Make sure it extends the entire length of the stairway.
- If an area is open between the top rail and tread, an intermediate rail or equivalent safeguard is required.

Legislation

Reference: 16-4 of the *Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2020*

Reference: 9-10(1) of the *Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2020*