



Stairwells (working in and around) Standards

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1. Introduction

The purpose of these stairwells standards is to ensure that our site workers remain safe when working in and around stairwell openings. An open stairwell is a potential fall from height if no fall protection has been put in place.

2. Forming the stairwell opening

This will be done by the carpenters when they build the floor on each level. Initially the fall protection would be in place from the decking systems or a scaffold birdcage, which is in place when the floors are being constructed. Before this fall protection is removed a sacrificial stairwell covering must be put in place to prevent anyone falling through. The Space 4 design can be used; however if a different method of installing the sacrificial floor is used then an approved design must be in place. These are classed as temporary works and must be entered into the Temporary Works Register

Refer to HSMS form [056](#) – Temporary Works Register

Other methods of covering up the stairwell opening are acceptable, these could include the use of Youngman's type boards or a scaffold laydown. Youngman's boards are classed as a standard solution for temporary works and must be used as per the manufacturer's recommendations and scaffold laydowns must have a design. Whatever method is chosen it must be added to the Temporary Works Register.

Access hatches must be fitted to allow safe access/ egress to the upper floors, for the decking contractors/ scaffolders that install safety decking or scaffold birdcages. The hatches must be combined within the design for the stairwell covering. A suitable ladder must also be supplied, that is compatible with the access hatch, the ladder must be secured to prevent it slipping. Scaffold ladders should not be used to access stairwells.

Carpenters and site management must complete the stairwell fall protection register on installation of the sacrificial flooring and after the 7-day inspection.

Refer to HSMS form [019K](#) – Stairwell Fall Protection Inspection Register

3. Opening the stairwell and fitting the stairs

Before the stairwell is opened, a proprietary stairwell protection system must be fitted to prevent a fall. The carpenters can gain access through the trap hatches that have been installed or by sliding the Youngman's boards or scaffold boards back if a scaffold laydown has been used; to create enough space to gain access to the upper floor using a ladder. The ladder must be suitable

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for that task and must be footed or secured to prevent it from slipping. The carpenter will then gain entry to the floor and the proprietary stairwell protection can be passed up to him/her to install. This must be done before the remainder of the stairwell covering is removed.

The use of proprietary stairwell protection must be added on to the Temporary Works Register. This is classed as a standard solution and the manufacturer's guidance on how to fit it must be followed. Using the newel post to nail pieces of timber for edge protection is bad practice and should not be done.

When fitting the proprietary stairwell protection, each hole in the footplate must be suitably screwed. The hand rails should be 4"X2" and they should be screwed in position. Service batten must not be used.

The proprietary stairwell protection must be stepped back from the stairwell opening in order that the baluster rail on the landing and the bulkhead/ stud wall can be installed with the protection in place.

Once the proprietary stairwell system has been installed Site Managers must ensure that the stairwell system has been correctly installed by a qualified installer. Site managers must also carry out a 7 day inspection to ensure that the system has not been tampered with and remains safe to use. The initial inspections and 7 day inspections must be entered in the stairwell protection inspection register. Site management must also inspect the system if it has been removed and replaced, altered or after an accident/ near miss accident.

Refer to HSMS form [019H](#) – Stairwell Fall Protection Inspection Register

Once the stairwell protection has been installed then the stairs can be landed.

The carpenters must provide a detailed set of RAMS for this activity.

4. Installing a second flight of stairs

When the build requires 3 stories or more we must ensure that the same process (above) of opening up the second stairwell is followed. Carpenters must ensure that fall protection is put in place over the stairwell opening for the first floor. This could be done by putting in a bird cage scaffold, replacing the sacrificial stairwell covering or using the Oxford Landing System, if the latter is used then it must not be overloaded. Whatever method is chosen it must be detailed in the carpenters RAMS. No work is to be carried out over an open first floor stairwell.

5. Monitoring

Site management monitors the safe use of stairwells via daily site checks, ensuring stairwell protection remains in place until the permanent protection is put in place. The Group HS&E Department monitors compliance with these standards via regular site HS&E inspections.

6. Further reading

[The Home Builders Federation/ Access Industry Forum, temporary edge protection, risks of cross contamination](#)

[The Home Builders Federation/ Access Industry Forum, temporary edge protection, inspection requirements](#)

[The Home Builders Federation/ Access Industry Forum, temporary edge protection, training & competence](#)

[The Home Builders Federation/ Access Industry Forum, temporary edge protection, types, classes & testing](#)

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7. Tool Box Talk

Refer to HSMS [TBT](#) – W@H Stairwells

VERSION ISSUED	Date
<u>Version 1</u> Sections 1,2,3, 4,5,6	08.11.2021
<u>Version 2</u> Further reading (HBF/AIF guidance documents added)	19.04.2022
<u>Version 3</u> Added more detail in relation to access hatches and updated stairwell protection inspection register to include sacrificial flooring	19.10.2023

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