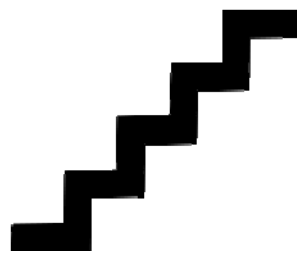


# Tool Box Talk



## Temporary Stairs and Handrails

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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.

### What the legislation says . . .

For **temporary stairs**, section 251 of the Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 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 121(1) of the Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 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 three 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 ½") 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.)