Fall Protection – Toeboards



What are toeboards?

Toeboards are protective barriers that are placed near the ground or walking surface. They are often used when there is a risk that tools or other objects could fall onto a person from a platform or other raised area, or through a floor opening or hole. They are often used as a part of a guardrail system. As well, toeboards alert workers to an edge, providing added protection to help prevent individuals from slipping over the edge.

It is good practice to have toeboards around

- floor openings or holes,
- ramps and runways,
- elevated walkways,
- platforms,
- scaffolding, and
- other unprotected edges at a height where materials could fall off the edge.

What is meant by load specifications?

Regulations often require a load specification. This requirement refers to the amount of force that guardrails may be expected to support, and is measured in newtons (N) or pounds (lbs). The force requirements will depend on the applications of the guardrail and the legislative requirements in your jurisdiction.

The CSA Standard Z797-18 Code of practice for access scaffold also provides minimum load bearing and height requirements for guardrails and toeboards.

In most jurisdictions, use of a toeboard may be specified for certain circumstances, particularly when used with guardrails. Always check with your jurisdiction for exact requirements.

What should be considered when installing and removing toeboards?

If the toeboard is not high enough to prevent tools or items from falling, increase the height of the toeboard, or install solid or mesh panels. Panels may

be required when stacking material near a fall area, such as an elevated walkway or floor opening.

When installing or rebuilding a toeboard, make sure it is installed according to the manufacturer’s instructions, or your jurisdiction’s requirements.

Improper removal of toeboards can leave protruding edges or parts, such as nails, that may injure workers.

What should be done if the toeboard is removed or in poor repair?

When work on a guardrail requires removing a toeboard or the toeboard is in poor condition, consider the whole guardrail system as unsafe and the fall hazard area as unprotected. To ensure the safety of those around the fall hazard area:

- Clear that area so it is free from slip or trip hazards.
- Mark it off as a fall hazard area with caution tape or a warning barrier.
- Alert all those working nearby that the guardrails are no longer adequate protection.
- Post warning signs outside the roped off area alerting workers of the danger from the unprotected fall hazard.
- Set up travel restraint or fall arrest systems for those persons working in the fall hazard area while the toeboard is not in place or cannot be relied upon.

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