Occupational Safety and Health requirements Subpart M of 1926, promulgated in 1995, requires that employees be protected from hazards associated with holes.

Paragraph 1926.501(b)(4)(I) requires that employees be protected from falling into or through holes (including skylight openings) that are 6 feet or more above lower levels by covering over the hole, erecting a guardrail system around the hole, or by using of a personal fall arrest system.

NOTE: Skylights are considered holes when they cannot support at lease twice the weight of employees, equipment and materials that may be imposed on them. You must cover them or erect guardrail systems around all skylights to prevent employees from falling into them. In some instances you may instead use a personal fall arrest/positioning system with proper anchorages.

OSHA defines a “hole” as a gap or void 2 inches (5.1cm) or more in its least dimension, found in a floor, roof or other walking/working surface.

Each employee on a walking working surface must be protected from tripping in or stepping into or through holes (including skylights) by covers.

The standard references tripping hazards, which alludes to housekeeping on site. Identify and remove all items that pose a tripping hazard where an employee could fall into a hole. Define routes of travel on the roof away from fall hazards such as skylights. Defining a route of egress on roofs is very effective in isolating fall hazards from holes.

Each employee on a walking working surface must be protected from objects falling through holes (including skylights by covers.

For clarification, OSHA does not intend that a guardrail be erected around holes while employees are working at the hole, passing materials, etc. Therefore, if the cover is removed while work is in progress, guardrails are not required because they would interfere with the performance of work. However, other forms of fall protection must be used by workers at the hole when guardrails and covers are removed and they must be reinstalled after work at the hole is complete.

OSHA does not recognize a controlled access zone or safety monitoring system as an acceptable means of protecting workers exposed to falling into or through holes. OSHA does not believe that the use of controlled access zones and safety monitoring systems would adequately protect employees working in proximity to holes.

Remember, the three systems that OSHA considers effective in preventing employees from falling through holes are: hole covers, guardrail systems and personal fall arrest/positioning systems.

Learn the proper methods for identification of hole fall hazards and the specification of the best fall protection system to reduce exposure. Learn the proper methods for installing the fall protection system specified. Remember, an improperly installed fall protection system could lead to a false sense of security and increase the exposure of employees to a fall into or through holes.

(This form must be filed for record keeping purposes)

Date: ______________________   Jobsite Location: ______________________________________

Attendee Signatures