

Safe access to Stairways - Gangways and Ramps

Safe access to elevated areas often involves using stairways, gangways, and ramps. Ensuring their safety involves specific design, maintenance, and usage practices. Here's a detailed overview of each:

1. Stairways

Design Requirements:

Dimensions: Stairways should have consistent step dimensions, including riser height and tread width, to prevent trips and falls.

Handrails: Handrails should be provided on both sides (unless there is a specific reason not to) and be at a comfortable height for users.

Landings: Landings should be provided at the top and bottom of stairways and at intervals if the stairway is long. They must be level and have enough space for safe maneuvering.

Visibility: Stairs should be well-lit and have clear, visible markings if there are any changes in direction or elevation.

Safety Features:

Non-Slip Surfaces: Treads should have a non-slip surface to prevent slips and falls.

Guardrails: If the stairway is open-sided, guardrails or barriers should be installed to prevent falls.

Maintenance:

Regular Inspections: Check for any wear and tear, loose handrails, or damaged steps regularly.

Immediate Repairs: Address any issues such as loose or damaged steps promptly to maintain safety.

Usage:

Proper Use: Workers should use handrails when ascending or descending and avoid carrying loads that obstruct their view or balance.

2. Gangways

Design Requirements:

Width: Gangways should be wide enough to allow safe passage, considering the size of equipment or materials that will be moved across them.

Load Capacity: They must be designed to handle the maximum load expected, including the weight of people and equipment.

Safety Features:

Non-Slip Surface: The surface should be non-slip to prevent accidents, particularly in wet or greasy conditions.

Guardrails: Guardrails should be installed on both sides of the gangway to prevent falls, especially if the gangway is elevated.

Maintenance:

Inspection: Regularly inspect gangways for signs of wear, damage, or instability.

Cleaning: Keep the surface clean and free from obstructions or debris that could cause slips or trips.

Usage:

Clear Path: Ensure gangways are kept clear of obstructions and are used for their intended purpose only.

Load Distribution: Avoid overloading gangways and ensure that loads are evenly distributed.

3. Ramps

Design Requirements:

Slope: Ramps should have a gentle slope to ensure they are accessible and safe. The recommended slope ratio depends on the use (e.g., 1:12 for wheelchair access).

Width: Ramps should be wide enough to accommodate users safely, with enough space for any equipment or materials being used.

Safety Features:

Non-Slip Surface: Ramps should have a textured, non-slip surface to prevent slips, especially in adverse weather conditions.

Handrails: Ramps should have handrails on both sides if they are used by people, particularly if the ramp is steep or long.

Maintenance:

Inspection: Regularly check ramps for structural integrity, slip resistance, and any wear and tear.

Cleaning: Ensure ramps are kept clean and free from ice, snow, or other debris that might create slipping hazards.

Usage:

Proper Use: Users should walk or move equipment up and down ramps slowly and carefully. Ensure that the ramp's surface is clear of obstructions.

General Safety Considerations:

Training: Ensure that all personnel are trained in the proper use of stairways, gangways, and ramps.

Signage: Use clear signage to indicate safe practices, load limits, and potential hazards.

Emergency Access: Ensure that stairways, gangways, and ramps are accessible in case of emergencies, and keep them clear for quick evacuation if needed.

By adhering to these guidelines, you can help ensure that stairways, gangways, and ramps are safe for everyone who uses them.