

A University employee was injured when they fell into an unguarded shaft landing on the floor of the shaft ~12 feet below.

What happened?

A University employee was injured when they fell through an open shaft in the floor of an air handler and landed on the level below. The interior of the air handler was dimly lit and the employee who entered did not see the fall hazard and stepped backward into the unguarded opening. The employee sustained injuries in the fall but recovered fully and returned to work within a couple of weeks.

What went right:

- Employees were working in a pair and had 2-way communication devices
- Rapid Response Team provided assistance quickly
- EHS was informed of incident in a timely manner
- A Campus-wide effort to find and fix similar issues was launched after the incident

Lessons Learned:

This incident highlights the importance of proper fall protection and safety protocols when performing work. Falls are among the leading causes of serious work-related injuries and deaths.

The following can help prevent these types of incidents:

- Installation of fall protection systems such as guardrails along unprotected edges that are 4 feet or more above the surface below
- Installation of grates over shaft openings
- Installation or use of adequate lighting in work areas
- Situational awareness - scanning a work area for potential hazards before working in the area



Unguarded shaft opening which employee fell into.



125 South Fort Douglas Blvd, Salt Lake City, UT 84113
801.581.6590 | oehs.utah.edu