

Cellar Hatch Guidance

Health and Safety Guidance for Businesses with Cellar Hatches

Due to a number of recent incidents BBfA have produced this guidance for businesses with cellar hatches.

For businesses with cellar hatches, a few proactive measures can significantly reduce the risk of accidents, including slips, trips, falls, and injuries due to improper handling.

Follow the guidance below to keep staff, customers, and suppliers safe around your cellar hatch areas.

1. Mark the Area Clearly

- **Signage:** Install clear, visible signs both on and around the hatch indicating the potential hazard. Signs should be bright, use clear language, and ideally include easily identified symbols for better understanding.
- **Floor Markings:** Outline the hatch area with bright-coloured, anti-slip tape or paint to make it highly visible.
- **Temporary Signage:** When the hatch is open, place temporary “Caution” or “Do Not Enter” signs in visible areas nearby to warn staff and customers. Ideally do not use the hatch when customers are on site.

2. Secure the Hatch Properly

- **Locking Mechanism:** Ensure the hatch has a robust and easy-to-operate locking mechanism that holds it securely in both open and closed positions.
- **Barrier or Guard Rails:** When the hatch is open, place portable barriers or guard rails around the opening. This helps prevent anyone from accidentally entering or falling into the cellar area.
- **Safety Cones:** Place safety cones around the hatch perimeter to create a buffer zone and further discourage entry or accidental contact.

3. Regular Inspections and Maintenance

- **Routine Inspections:** Schedule weekly or monthly inspections to check for any damage to the hatch or its locking mechanisms. Ensure the surrounding floor is free from wear or any tripping hazards.
- **Smooth Operation:** Confirm that the hatch opens and closes smoothly without excessive force. Address any signs of rust, cracks, or warping immediately.
- **Cleaning and Upkeep:** Keep the hatch area clean and free of dust, liquids, or debris. Use if appropriate use anti-slip mats around the entry point to prevent slips.

4. Staff Training

- **Safe Operation Training:** Train all relevant staff on proper opening and closing procedures for the hatch. Emphasise the importance of secure locking both before and after each use.
- **Delivery Protocols:** If the hatch is used for deliveries, ensure staff know to coordinate with delivery personnel to manage the area safely during the process.
- **Emergency Awareness:** Teach staff to quickly recognize signs of malfunction or hazards associated with the hatch and to report these issues immediately.

5. Emergency Protocols and First Aid

- **Accident Response Plan:** Develop a clear emergency response plan in the event of an incident. Make sure staff know the steps to take if someone falls or is injured.
- **First Aid Kits:** Keep a well-stocked first aid kit easily accessible and make sure trained first aid personnel are available during peak operational hours.
- **Report System:** Encourage staff to report any incidents or near-misses related to the cellar hatch and investigate these reports to improve safety measures.

6. Additional Precautions

- **Lighting:** Ensure the hatch area is well-lit at all times, particularly if it's used during evening or low-light hours.
- **Weatherproofing:** For outdoor cellar hatches, check that they are watertight and free from rust or weather-related damage. Wet or slippery hatches increase fall risk.
- **Emergency Access:** Make sure emergency services can access the cellar in case of an emergency. Test accessibility as part of your emergency drills.

The main piece of legislation that apply to this area is the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 which puts a requirement on businesses to ensure their business premises and practices are safe.

By adhering to these practices, businesses with cellar hatches can significantly reduce the risk of accidents, creating a safer environment for employees and customers alike. Regular training, clear marking, and diligent maintenance are key to keeping your cellar hatch secure and hazard-free.

Better Business for All works to boost business productivity and growth by making it easier for businesses to access the regulatory support they need from Local Authorities such as Trading Standards, Environmental Health, Licensing, and others. BBfA also works with regulators to help them better understand the challenges faced by businesses.

I hope this guidance has been useful, further business support information can be found here:

www.hertfordshirefutures.co.uk/business/better-business-for-all/