



FATALITY NARRATIVE

Roofer Dies After Falling from Ladder or Roof*

Industry: Roofing contractors
Task: Maintenance and repair of roof
Occupation: Roofer
Type of Incident: Fall from ladder or roof

Release Date: December 4, 2012
Incident Date: January 18, 2010
Case No.: 10WA009
SHARP Report No.: 71-116-2012

On January 18, 2010, a 65-year-old roofer died from an unwitnessed fall either from a ladder or roof. He had worked as a roofer his entire adult life. For the past 10 years he had done roofing maintenance and repair work as needed for a property manager of several buildings at a light industrial park. On the day of the incident the roofer was repairing a roof using mastic sealant. After doing those repairs he went to a nearby building, perhaps to check on the work he had done on the building's roof the previous week. He used a 20 foot aluminum extension ladder to access the building's roof which was 16 feet 8 inches above the ground. The roof was flat with an 18 inch parapet. A passerby discovered the roofer lying unresponsive on the pavement next to the ladder which was still leaning against the the building's wall. He was taken to a hospital where he was pronounced dead. The medical examiner determined that he died from head injuries due to a fall from either the ladder or the building roof.



Requirements

- Follow the ladder rules as laid out in WAC 296-876 Ladders, Portable and Fixed.
- For roof work follow WAC 296-155, Construction Work, Part C-1 Fall Restraint and Fall Arrest.
- Have a procedure for checking the welfare of all employees during working hours. See WAC 296-155-100.

Recommendations

- Try not to work alone. Tell others when and where you will be working. Whenever possible, have a "buddy system" so that no one is alone when working at heights. The roofer had been lying on the pavement for an unknown period of time before someone noticed him. If a co-worker had been there or someone who knew where he was had checked up on him, emergency medical services could have responded more quickly.
- Set up ladders so the angle is about 75 degrees above horizontal with three rungs, or at least three feet above the landing surface. The base should be set out one-fourth of the ladder's height to its top support point. The ladder used in this incident was not tall enough to meet these conditions.
- If you are feeling dizzy or ill, do not work at height from a ladder or roof.
- Building designers and owners should consider the safety needs of workers who need to perform construction and maintenance tasks near a roof edge by:
 - installing permanent roof anchors to provide tie off points.
 - designing roof parapets at least 39 inches high that can serve as fall protection.

State Wide Statistics: This was number 5 of 89 work-related fatalities in Washington State during 2010, and was number 3 of 7 construction-related fatalities.

**This bulletin was developed to alert employers and employees of a tragic loss of life of a worker in Washington State and is based on preliminary data ONLY and does not represent final determinations regarding the nature of the incident or conclusions regarding the cause of the fatality. Developed by WA State Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program and the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH), WA State Dept. of Labor & Industries. The FACE Program is supported in part by a grant from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). For more information, contact the Safety and Health Assessment and Research for Prevention (SHARP) Program, 1-888-667-4277.*

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