# Fatality Narrative

## Construction Laborer Falls Through Skylight*

**Industry:** Commercial and institutional building construction
**Occupation:** Laborer
**Task:** Carrying roof panels
**Type of Incident:** Fall through skylight

**Release Date:** August 4, 2004

**Case No.: 03WA047**
**SHARP Report No.:** 71-22-2004

On September 4, 2003, a construction laborer fell 50 feet through an unguarded skylight during re-roofing operations at a steel plant. The 35-year-old victim was an employee of the construction company performing the re-roofing and had been working at this job site for the past three weeks. He was working with a crew of three others. On the date of the incident, the victim and another worker carried roof panels about 300 feet along a flat section of roof and then walked up to the roof ridge to hand the panels off to two workers on the other side who were fastening them to the roof structure. During one of these trips the victim handed a panel over the ridgeline to another worker and then slipped, fell backwards, and slid on his back onto an unguarded fiberglass skylight. The skylight failed and he fell 50 feet, landing on machinery below. The victim died at the scene.

### Requirements/Recommendations
(! Indicates items required by law)

- ! Employers must develop a fall protection work plan that identifies all fall hazards.
- ! Employers must train workers to recognize the potential danger of falling through skylights and roof openings.
- ! Guardrails or covers over skylights must be installed before construction work begins and remain in place until work is completed.
- ! Employers must ensure when workers are exposed to a fall hazard of 10 feet or more in height that the workers are provided with the training and equipment to appropriately deal with fall hazards by using fall restraint systems, fall arrest systems, or positioning devices.
- Employers should conduct a job-site hazard assessment and develop a hazard prevention plan to control and eliminate the hazards found in the assessment.
- Never assume a skylight will hold the weight of a worker.
- Building owners, designers, and facility managers should consider workers' safety when exposed to the hazards associated with skylights and take steps to address them.
- Skylights can either be structurally designed, or fitted with a protective grillwork to be capable of withstanding the load of a worker.

**State Wide Statistics:** This was the 54th out of 74 work-related fatalities in Washington State during the year 2003, and was the 8th construction-related fatality of the year.

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*This bulletin was developed at the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries to alert employers and employees in a timely manner of a tragic loss of life of a worker in Washington State. We encourage you to consider the above information as you make safety decisions for or recommendations to your company or constituency. The information in this notice 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 the Washington State Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) and Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act (WISHA) Programs at the WA State Dept. of Labor & Industries. For more information, contact the Safety and Health Assessment and Research for Prevention (SHARP) Program, 1-888-667-4277, http:/www.lni.wa.gov/sharp/face.