

Fatality Narrative

Carpenter Falls Through Skylight Opening*

Industry: Framing contractor
Occupation: Carpenter
Task: Cutting scuppers on roof
Type of Incident: Fall

Release Date: September 26, 2005
Case No.: 04WA08401
SHARP Report No.: 71-39-2005

On September 24, 2004, a carpenter was fatally injured when he fell from a roof through an unguarded skylight opening. The 50-year-old carpenter was employed by a contractor to do punch list carpentry. He had worked for his employer for 10 years. On the day of the incident the victim was working on the low-sloped roof of a residential wood frame house under remodel construction. The day was sunny and warm. He was cutting scuppers, or water drains for downspouts, in the roof. His battery powered saw lost its charge and he walked to another part of the roof to get a new battery. After retrieving the battery the victim turned and took two steps and fell through an unguarded, uncovered 44"x 44" skylight opening. He fell 15 feet 8 inches and landed on an interior stairway. Members of the local fire department gave first aid and he was transported to a hospital where he died twenty-five days later from severe neck and head injuries.

Requirements/Recommendations

(! Indicates items required by law)

- ! All floor and roof openings must be properly covered and marked or guarded.
- ! Employers must develop and implement hazard prevention controls that manage and /or eliminate the hazards, prior to assigning employees to work at or on elevated areas.
- ! The employer must develop a fall protection work plan that includes the identification of all fall hazards if employees are working at heights.
- During construction, place temporary standard guardrails around skylight openings or properly marked, identified, or secured covers that are capable of supporting a potential load of 800 pounds or more.
- All employees should be trained in all the elements of the fall protection work plan. The training should include how to address hazards such as skylights, floor, roof, and wall openings.
- The contractor should coordinate communication and task scheduling between sub-contractors and workers on the job site to assure personnel are aware of current activities and hazards.

State Wide Statistics: This was the 73rd out of 92 work-related fatalities in Washington State during the year 2004, and was the 15th out of 17 construction-related fatalities.

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. The FACE Program is supported 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, <http://www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Research/FACE/>.

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Photo – Showing the incident scene with the skylight opening and stairwell below where the victim fell.

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