

Fatality Narrative

Site Superintendent Falls Through Skylight Cutout*

Industry: Commercial and institutional building construction

Occupation: Site superintendent

Task: Overseeing installation of skylights

Type of Incident: Fall through roof opening

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On February 18, 2006, a site superintendent was killed when he fell through a skylight cutout. The 62-year-old victim, with 30 years of experience as a construction manager and supervisor, had worked for his present employer for 7 months. The incident happened at a grocery store under construction, where workers had been cutting 5' by 6' skylight openings in the metal pan decking of a roof. Two workers were in the process of installing curbs and temporary covers in preparation for the installation of the skylights. The victim asked the two workers to help him move scrap metal decking and a piece of equipment so that they could proceed with their work. The workers secured the partially sawn cutout they were working on by screwing an eight-foot 2 x 4 onto it. The victim was walking from one section of the roof to another holding a piece of scrap decking in his hand when he stepped on the cutout decking being held in place by the 2 x 4 and fell through the opening 18 feet to the ground. Neither the victim nor the other two workers were using fall protection.

Requirements/Recommendations

(! Indicates items required by law)

- ! Employers must ensure that employees who are exposed to fall hazards at heights greater than 10 feet use fall protection.
- ! Temporary roof and floor openings must be covered with material capable of supporting the maximum potential load.
- ! Metal decking must remain in place until immediately prior to installation of skylights
- ! If covers or fall protection are not used, standard guardrails must be placed to protect workers from falling through temporary roof and floor openings.
- ! Employers must develop and implement a site-specific fall prevention plan.
- Use alternate work methods that minimize the risk of falling. For example, after this incident the employer began using a scissor lift so that workers could cut skylight holes from underneath the metal decking.

**This bulletin was developed at the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries to alert employers and employees 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) Program and the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) 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>.

State Wide Statistics: This was the 10th out of 62 work-related fatalities in Washington State during 2006 to date, and was the 2nd out of 17 construction-related fatalities to date.



Photo: The picture above shows the incident site where the supervisor fell through a partially-cut and unprotected skylight opening.

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