

Foreman Falls 15 Feet from Roof

An experienced roofing company foreman suffered rib fractures, a collapsed lung, and multiple back fractures after falling 15 feet from a roof.

At around 9:30 a.m. on the day of the incident, the foreman and another worker were tied off to a fall protection system while working on the lower level of the two-level cedar shake roof. The pitch of the steep roof was 8 in 12.

The workers needed to move material from the lower level to the upper level. The foreman unhooked his harness from the fall protection system to move the materials.

While holding a bag in one hand and a saw in the other, the foreman took a shortcut across on the shady side of the house, where the roof was still wet from morning dew.

As he walked across the wet roof, about two feet from the edge, he slipped and fell 15 feet to the ground. The foreman landed on his back and left side on the concrete. He hit his head and briefly lost consciousness. He had only been untied for about thirty seconds when he fell.

The foreman was taken to the hospital by the other worker. He had to be transferred to a larger hospital to be treated for multiple traumatic injuries, which required surgery. He was unable to work for three months, and when he returned, spent nine months on modified duty.

What do you think went wrong?

In the space below, list some of the factors that you think could have contributed to this incident. Then, flip the page over for contributing factors and safety recommendations and requirements.



Figure 1: Red arrow shows the roof edge the foreman fell from while moving materials.



Figure 2: The foreman landed on concrete after falling 15 feet from the wet roof.

Reporting: Employers are required to contact DOSH within 8 hours of a workplace fatality or in-patient hospitalization of any employee and within 24 hours of a non-hospitalized amputation or loss of an eye of any employee. See [WAC 296-27-031](#).

Contributing Factors

The foreman untied from the fall protection system to move material. The employer did not ensure that their worker was using fall protection while moving materials between levels on the roof. Never untie or detach from fall protection system to move materials.

No fall protection work plan. The employer did not have a written fall protection work plan. The workers were not made aware of the potential fall hazards and safe fall protection system use.

Slick roof conditions. The shaded areas of the roof were still wet with dew.

Recommendations

Plan for safety. Conduct pre-shift safety meetings to discuss jobsite hazards. Discuss how to move materials safely—maintaining 100% tie-off and having one hand free of material.

Check roof surfaces. Be aware of roof surface conditions, and avoid walking or working on slick surfaces.

Perform spot checks. Employers should perform unannounced fall protection spot checks to ensure their workers are maintaining 100% tie-off.

Requirements

- **Steep pitched roofs.** Regardless of work activity, employers must ensure that employees exposed to fall hazards of 4 feet or more while working on a roof with a pitch greater than 4 in 12 use either a fall restraint system, fall arrest system, or positioning device system. See [WAC 296-880-20005\(6\)](#)
- **Fall protection work plan.** The employer must develop and implement a written fall protection work plan including each area of the work place where the employees are assigned and where fall hazards of ten feet or more exist. See [WAC 296-880-10020](#)
 - Some of the topics the fall protection work plan is required to address that were factors in this incident include **identifying all fall hazards** in the work area, **describing the method of fall arrest or fall restraint** to be provided, and **describing the method for prompt, safe removal of injured workers**.
- **Training.** The employer must provide fall protection training for employees exposed to fall hazards. The training must enable each employee to recognize the hazards of falling and procedures to be followed in order to minimize those hazards. See [WAC 296-880-10015](#)

Resources

- Chapter 296-880 WAC: Unified Safety Standards for Fall Protection: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=296-880>
- Fall Protection Basics for Construction: <https://lni.wa.gov/forms-publications/F414-154-000.pdf>
- L&I's Fall Protection Work Plan form: <https://www.lni.wa.gov/forms-publications/F417-272-000.pdf>

Safety Training Sign-In (Print Name Legibly) Date: _____

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