

FATALITY NARRATIVE

Roofing Contractor Falls 35 Feet from Roof

Industry: Roofing contractors
Task: Inspecting roof
Occupation: Roofing contractor
Type of Incident: Fall

Incident Date: Nov. 30, 2012
Release Date: March 12, 2014
SHARP Report No.: 71-129-2014
Case No.: 12WA05001

On Nov. 30, 2012, a 52-year-old roofing contractor died when he fell from a roof. The contractor was hired by a homeowner to repair a roof leak. He and an employee arrived late afternoon at the house, which was located on a hillside. It was raining lightly. The contractor accessed the cedar-shake roof by climbing up a ladder he placed in front of the house. The roof was approximately 6/12 pitch. He walked along the roof to the back of the house to inspect the section of the roof where the leak was occurring. His employee went to a deck on the back of the house where the homeowner had set up a ladder. The employee climbed up the ladder. Just as he got to the top of the ladder, the contractor, who was standing on the roof several feet above him, slipped and fell. As the contractor was falling, he grabbed the employee's extended arm. They both fell and as they did so, they hit and broke the deck railing below.



Photo of incident scene where a roofing contractor fell 35 feet from a roof and his employee fell from a ladder.

The contractor landed 35 feet below on a concrete walkway; the employee landed on the ground. The employee was taken to a hospital with serious injuries. The contractor died at the scene. He was wearing strap-on metal spike rubber pads over the soles of his boots and was not using fall protection.

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Requirements

- **Fall protection on steep pitched roofs.** Regardless of work activity, employers must ensure that employees exposed to fall hazards of four feet or more while working on a roof with a pitch greater than 4/12 use one of the following systems: fall restraint, fall arrest, or positioning device. See WAC 296-155-24609(7)(a).
- **Inspecting or estimating roof conditions.** While there are some exemptions from fall protection requirements, these exemptions do not apply to persons inspecting or estimating on roofs that would be considered a "hazardous slope" by definition. See WAC 296-155-24605(4)(b).
- **Hazardous slope.** A slope where normal footing cannot be maintained without the use of devices due to the pitch of the surface, weather conditions, or surface material. See WAC 296-155-24603.
- **Steep pitch roof.** A roof having a slope greater than 4/12. See WAC 296-155-24603.

Recommendations

- **Short-duration roof work.** All personnel who access a roof, even for a short period of time, in order to inspect, estimate, install a fall protection anchor, make repairs, or any other work activity which exposes them to a fall hazard should assess the risk of falling and take appropriate safety measures.

Statewide Statistics: This was number 57 of 64 work-related fatalities in Washington State during 2012, and was number 8 of 8 construction-related fatalities.

This narrative 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 grant# 5 U60 OH008487-09). For more information, contact the Safety and Health Assessment and Research for Prevention (SHARP) Program. 1-888-667-4277.