

FATALITY NARRATIVE

Rofer Falls 19 Feet from Roof

Industry: Roofing Contractors
Task: Replacing residential roof
Occupation: Roofer
Type of Incident: Fall from roof

Incident Date: March 31, 2015
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In March 2015, a 31-year-old Hispanic roofer was injured and later died after he fell from a house roof. The incident occurred at a job site during a tear-off and replacement of a roof on a two-story house. The victim had worked with his employer, a roofing contractor, for three months as a roofer. He had no previous roofing experience, but had done residential framing. At 8 a.m. on the day of the incident, the four-member crew met for their daily safety meeting after which they began the roof tear-off. They were each using a personal fall arrest system consisting of a full-body harness, a rope, a rope grab, and roof anchors. The roof pitch was 8:12. The weather was cloudy with intermittent light rain and mist. They worked quickly and by afternoon they had removed the existing roof and were laying down plywood sheathing and felt paper. While placing sheathing next to the chimney, the victim decided that he needed another small piece of sheathing. The sheathing was located on the other side of the roof. He unhooked from his fall protection safety line then slipped and fell from the roof, landing 19 feet below on concrete. Coworkers saw him just



Incident scene showing where the roofer fell 19 feet from a residential roof after he unclipped from his safety line.

before he fell, but did not see him fall. They found him unconscious on the ground and called emergency services. He was transported to a hospital. He died 12 days later from multiple injuries to his head and body. His coworkers did not understand why he unclipped from his safety line. They were all wearing fall protection.

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Requirements

- **Fall protection on steep pitched roofs.** Regardless of the work activity, you 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 one of the following: fall restraint system, fall arrest system, or positioning device system. See [WAC 296-155-24609\(7\)\(a\)](#)
- **Fall protection work plan.** You 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 10 feet or more are present. See [WAC 296-155-24611\(2\)](#)
- **Accident prevention program.** Develop a formal accident prevention program that is tailored to the particular workplace or operation and the types of hazards involved. See [WAC 296-155-110\(2\)](#)

Recommendations

- Before beginning a job, ensure that there are systems in place to protect workers from falls. This could include installing multiple anchorages positioned so that workers can safely move about the roof.
- Maintain 100% tie-off while on a roof. Perform spot-checks to make sure all workers comply.
- Encourage safety accountability among workers. Employers should make clear that worker safety is an expectation and a priority.

Resources

Reducing Falls During Residential Construction: Re-Roofing
www.osha.gov/Publications/reducing-falls-during-residential-construction-re-roofing.pdf

Spanish Language version:
www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3579_sp.pdf

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.

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