

**INCIDENT FACTS**

**REPORT #:**

71-203-2021

**REPORT DATE:**

January 19, 2021

**INCIDENT DATE:**

November 12, 2019

**VICTIM:**

45 years old

**INDUSTRY:**

Roofing contractors

**OCCUPATION:**

Roofer

**SCENE:**

Roof deck of three-story apartment building under construction

**EVENT TYPE:**

Fall



Roofing underlayment he attempted to grab on to as he was falling.

[For a slideshow version, click here.](#)



This narrative is an alert about the tragic loss of life of a worker and is based on preliminary data ONLY and does not represent final determinations regarding the nature of the incident or 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# 5U60OH008487). For more information visit [www.lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-research/ongoing-projects/work-related-fatalities-face](http://www.lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-research/ongoing-projects/work-related-fatalities-face).

## Roofer Falls 30 Feet from Rain Slick Roof

### SUMMARY

A 45-year-old roofer died when he fell 30 feet from a rain slick roof of an apartment building under construction.

His employer was a subcontractor installing sheathing material and asphalt shingles to newly constructed three-story apartment buildings. He had worked for the company for nine years. Over the past eight months, he had worked with a crew to roof six identical buildings.

Shortly after 8 a.m. with a light rain falling, he climbed up a ladder and went on to the plywood deck of a 5/12 pitch roof of an apartment building. The five other crew members were already working on the roof. When he saw that there was no anchor for him to clip on to, he descended the ladder, retrieved an anchor and

returned to the roof to install it on the roof ridge. While preparing to install his anchor, he fell and slid about 12 feet down the wet plywood roof deck. As he slid, he grabbed roofing underlayment in an attempt to stop his descent and then fell off the roof edge. As he fell, he struck a steel storage container and landed on the ground 30 feet below. His anchor and hammer were found near him. First responders took him to a hospital where he died of blunt force injuries.

Investigators found: **1)** The roofer was wearing a fall protection harness, but a lanyard was not attached to it. **2)** The plywood decking had been exposed to rain for several weeks and due to it being uncovered the plywood fibers absorbed water and expanded, making the decking slick. **3)** The roofer was wearing plastic rain pants, which could have accelerated his slide off the roof. **4)** A crew leader-crew safety meeting had not been held that week. **5)** A walk-around safety inspection had not been held that week.

### REQUIREMENTS

- Regardless of the work activity, the employer must ensure that employees exposed to fall hazards of four feet or more while working on a roof with a pitch greater than four in twelve use one of the following: (a) Fall restraint system. Safety monitor systems and warning line systems are prohibited on steep pitched roofs; (b) A personal fall arrest system; or (c) A positioning device system. See [WAC 296-880-20005\(6\)](#)
- Employers must hold crew leader-crew safety meetings at the beginning of each job, and at least weekly thereafter. See [WAC 296-155-110\(5\)\(a\)](#)
- Employers must conduct walk-around safety inspections at the beginning of each job, and at least weekly thereafter. See [WAC 296-155-110\(9\)\(a\)](#)

### RECOMMENDATIONS

FACE investigators concluded that, to help prevent similar occurrences:

- Before beginning a job, focus on identifying fall protection needs and ensure systems are in place to protect workers. This could include installing multiple anchorages positioned so that workers can safely move about the roof.
- Always use fall protection during roofing operations.



Three-story apartment building from which the roofer fell 30 feet.