

Topic Summary:

Fatal Hazard – Falling through unguarded skylights and roof and floor openings

Employers: Please take time to read this important information and share it with your employees. Since 1998, eight construction workers in Washington State have been killed when they fell through unguarded skylights and roof and floor openings. Two of those incidents occurred last year. The following is a summary of recent incidents:

- In August 2004, a worker at a commercial construction site fell 29 feet and landed on a concrete slab. He had been on the rooftop directing a crane that was loading construction materials onto the roof when he fell through a skylight opening that had been cut several days earlier. He died on the way to the hospital.
- In September 2004, a residential construction worker suffered fatal injuries after falling 15 feet. He had been working on a low-sloped roof and needed a new battery for his saw. He walked to where the batteries were kept, and then turned around to return to his work and inadvertently stepped into one of the unguarded roof openings. He never regained consciousness and died three weeks later.
- In September 2003, a construction laborer fell 50 feet during re-roofing operations at a steel plant. The victim had handed a roof panel to a co-worker when he slipped, fell backwards and slid on his back onto an unguarded fiberglass skylight. The fiberglass collapsed and he fell through the skylight, landing on machinery below. He died at the scene.

Where can I learn more?

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has published an alert called “Preventing Falls of Workers Through Skylights and Roof and Floor Openings.” This alert has recommendations and precautions that will help protect your employees from being seriously injured or killed.

The key precautions in protecting workers from falls through skylights and roof and floor openings are:

- All openings must be properly covered or guarded at all times.
- Skylights must either be guarded or designed for the weight of a person with a safety factor.
- Workers must be trained on correct procedures and hazard identification.

You can get a copy of the NIOSH alert from the NIOSH web site at:

www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2004-156/

How can I get help from Labor and Industries?

The Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) has assistance available at no charge. Please contact one of the regional offices listed below and ask for the WISHA* Consultation Supervisor.

Counties	Telephone Number
Island, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Whatcom	425-290-1431
King	206-515-2837 or 206-835-1146
Clallam, Jefferson, Kitsap, Pierce	253-596-3917
Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Klickitat, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Thurston, Wahkiakum	360-902-5472
Northwest Adams, Benton, Chelan, Columbia, Douglas, Franklin, Grant, Kittitas, Okanogan, Walla Walla, Yakima	509-886 6570
Southeast Adams, Asotin, Ferry, Garfield, Lincoln, Stevens, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Whitman	509-324 2543

Online Resources

- The Washington Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) web site at www.LNI.wa.gov/Safety/Research/FACE/
- WISHA Safety and Health rules: www.LNI.wa.gov/Safety/Rules

Other rules may apply.

*WISHA: Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act, the state equivalent of OSHA. L&I's WISHA Services Division administers workplace safety and health rules.



**Hazard
Alert
Inside**

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