TOOLBOXTALK

ROOF WORK



Roof work can expose employees to falls, openings, changing elevations, slippery surfaces, weather, mechanical equipment, noise, radiofrequency energy, and biological hazards. Before accessing a roof, employees must understand the access route, conditions of the work area, and controls required to perform the work safely. Conditions must also be reevaluated when the work or environment changes.

FALLS, EDGES AND OPENINGS

A fall hazard does not have to extend to the ground. Lower roofs, terraces, setbacks, balconies, platforms, and other surfaces below the work area are lower levels and must be considered when evaluating fall exposure. Under federal OSHA construction standards, employees exposed to an unprotected side or edge 6 feet or more above a lower level generally require appropriate fall protection. Walls and parapets do not automatically provide that protection. Federal construction guardrails generally have a top edge 42 inches, plus or minus 3 inches, above the walking or working surface and must meet applicable strength and intermediate protection requirements.

OSHA defines a wall opening as a gap or void in a wall or partition 30 inches or more high AND 18 inches or more wide through which an employee can fall. A hole is a gap or void 2 inches or more in its least dimension in a floor, roof, or other walking or working surface. Both must be evaluated and protected when they create a fall exposure. **Never assume that a skylight will support a worker.** Skylights that present a fall through hazard require appropriate protection.

An open roof hatch also creates a fall exposure. Roof access hatches should have a guardrail system with a self closing gate or equivalent protected entrance that prevents employees from inadvertently falling through the open hatch. Never defeat or remove this protection. A low slope roof has a slope of 4:12 or less. A steep roof has a slope greater than 4:12. Different fall protection methods may apply depending on the roof and work being performed. A warning line is not a guardrail and does not automatically eliminate the need for other fall protection.

ACCESS AND ROOF CONDITIONS

Maintain a safe, unobstructed route from the roof access point to the work area. Loose gravel, wet roofing materials, ice, cords, hoses, tools, debris, uneven surfaces, and changes in elevation can create slip and trip hazards. These conditions become particularly serious near an edge, opening, hatch, or lower roof level. Roof conditions can change during the workday. Wind can affect balance and move unsecured materials. Rain, snow, ice, lightning, extreme temperatures, and reduced visibility may make previously acceptable work unsafe. **When conditions change, reevaluate the hazards before continuing work.**

OTHER ROOFTOP HAZARDS

Antennas and telecommunications equipment may produce radiofrequency (RF) energy that cannot necessarily be detected by sight, sound, or smell. Observe posted warnings and restricted areas. Do not enter an identified RF hazard area until the exposure has been evaluated and required controls established.

Cooling towers and other water systems may create biological exposures, including potential exposure to Legionella through contaminated mist. Bird or animal droppings, nesting materials, mold, insects, standing water, and other contamination may also present health hazards. Do not disturb suspected contamination until it has been evaluated.

Mechanical equipment, generators, grinders, saws, chipping tools, and nearby operations may create hazardous noise. Use required hearing protection and remember that exposure depends on both sound level and duration.

BEFORE WORK BEGINS

Evaluate roof access, edges and elevation changes, walls and parapets, guardrails, holes, skylights, hatches, walking surfaces, weather, RF sources, biological hazards, noise, and nearby work. Correct identified hazards or establish the required controls before employees become exposed.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can a lower roof or terrace create a fall hazard even though it is not the ground?

   a) Yes, it is a lower level

2. What dimensions define an OSHA wall opening?

   a) 30" high AND 18" wide

3. Does a parapet, railing, or warning line automatically provide adequate fall protection?

   a) No

4. What should you do when roof or environmental conditions change?

   a) Reevaluate hazards before continuing

Federal OSHA References: 29 CFR 1926.500, 1926.501, 1926.502, 1926.52 and 1926.54.

Requirements above use federal OSHA construction standards as the baseline. Applicable State Plan, state or local requirements, project specifications, owner requirements, or company rules may be different or more restrictive. Verify requirements for the location and work being performed.

Talk Given By:	Date:
Company Name:	Location:
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Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act, employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthy workplace and workers have rights. OSHA can help answer questions or concerns from employers and workers. OSHA's On-site Consultation Program offers free and confidential advice to small and medium-sized businesses, with priority given to high-hazard worksites. For more information, contact your regional or area OSHA office, call 1-800-321-OSHA (6742), or visit www.osha.gov.

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