

“Up On Top” News

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Fall Protection Safety Guidelines

As a Building Owner or Manager who selects a roofing contractor for work on their facilities, fall protection should be an important consideration. An Owner/Manager who selects a contractor who does not follow OSHA guidelines could be exposing themselves to tremendous liability.

In the construction industry within the U.S., falls are the leading cause of workers fatalities. Each year, on average, between 150 and 200 workers are killed and more than 100,000 are injured as a result of falls at construction sites.

OSHA has recognized this high probability for serious injury due to falls and has implemented a comprehensive regulation to help reduce fall hazards. The regulations are CFR 1926.501-503.

The fall protection standard sets a uniform threshold of six feet, thereby providing consistent protection. This means that a roofing contractor's employees must be protected from fall hazards when an employee is six feet or more above a lower level.

Under fall protection standards, employers are able to select the fall protection measures that are best suited for the type of work being

performed. Fall protection can be provided through the use of

- Guardrail systems
- Safety net systems
- Personal fall arrest systems
- Warning line systems

Two of the most common methods used by roofing contractors are the personal fall arrest system on sloped roof applications, and the warning line system on flat roof application.

Personal fall arrest systems need to be inspected before each use, needs to have the attachment point located in the center of the wearers back, and cannot allow a rigged worker to fall more than six feet. Warning line systems need to be flagged at not more than six feet intervals, need to be supported so that the line is between 34-39 inches above the roof surface, and the supports need to be able resist at least 16 pounds of horizontal force. A properly flagged competent person can monitor workers who need to work outside of the warning lines.

A properly executed fall protection safety policy should be a basic covenant of any professional roofing contractor, and mandatory for a successful project.

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