Fatality – fall through roof
9 January 2020

Incident overview
A worker died after falling more than two metres through a fibro roof at Wollongong, while attempting to get onto a ladder to get off the roof.

The investigation
- SafeWork NSW inspectors responded to the incident.
- SafeWork NSW commenced an investigation to determine the cause and circumstances of the incident.
Safety information

Businesses are reminded of their duty to identify hazards and manage risks to health and safety in accordance with the provisions of the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017.

Consider ‘reasonably practicable’ control measures to manage the risks associated with falls.

Before starting work on a roof, you should inspect the condition of sheeting to determine if it can be walked on, such as a skylight, plastic or asbestos cement. Also, inspect the supporting roofing materials and fixings.

Make sure:

- you plan the work to avoid walking on brittle material
- you use an elevated work platform or boom lift, if possible
- you use temporary work platforms, such as crawling boards,
- you use a fall arrest system, such as a harness, with anchor points – train workers how to use it
- install safety mesh.

When you use a ladder, make sure:

- it’s at a 1:4 ratio
- it’s tied off at the top (and/or footed) and extends at least 900mm past the landing
- you don’t unclip the lanyard until standing on the ladder
- you review your control measures.

Further information

- Code of practice for managing the risk of falls at workplaces
- Falls through skylights and plastic roof sheeting
- Working safely at heights

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing. No conclusions should be drawn from the information in this publication about the cause of the incident or the culpability of any party.