

15/07/2019

Roofer fall from height

9 July 2019

Incident overview

A 22 year old male worker was undertaking re-roofing activities at a school auditorium in Hunters Hill when he fell approximately 8.5 metres through a penetration. The penetration had been covered with a sheet of black plastic, weighted down with sand bags, following the removal of a roof mounted air vent.

The worker was transported to Royal North Shore Hospital where he was treated for a dislocated hip, broken leg and broken elbow.



Image of the roof penetration the injured worker fell through.

The investigation

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

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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 risk of falls. Before starting work on an existing roof, carry out an inspection (from below) to determine:

- the presence and condition of non-trafficable sheeting and other brittle roof sheeting such as sky lights, plastic roof sheeting or asbestos cement sheeting
- the presence and condition of safety mesh.

When determining whether roof surfaces are safe to walk on, consider the product materials and method of fixing, including any possible deterioration in strength. Note: products may become brittle and fixings may become less rigid over time.

Implement these control measures to prevent workers from falling through non-trafficable roofs or skylights:

- Plan the work to avoid accessing unsafe or non-trafficable areas.
- Work from an elevated work platform or boom lift to avoid standing on the roof itself.
- Install temporary work platforms (eg crawling boards) and roof ladders as appropriate.
- Install barriers (eg guard rails or covers) that are secured and labelled with warning signs.
- Install safety mesh when installing the roof sheeting.
- Install a fall restraint / arrest system (harness system) which has adequately-installed anchorage points, along with training and instruction in the use.
- Ensure workers use a fall restraint / arrest systems are competent and take into consideration falls through the roof materials or penetrations, and subsequently adjust the length to limit slack as they move.

Apply these measures consistently and review as work progresses.

Further information

You can also refer to the following guidance materials:

- Our guide to [working safely at heights](#) includes information on managing the risks of falls, including codes of practice and guides to working on roofs.
- [Code of practice for preventing falls in housing construction](#).
- [Managing risks of falls in a workplace Code of Practice](#)
- [SafeWork Pocket Guide to Construction Safety](#)