

WHAT CAN ROOFERS DO?

Fall protection for sloped roofing

Think that you're perfectly safe working on a roof without fall protection? Think that the soles of your shoes are protection enough? Think again.

In recent years, an average of about nine workers die every year from falls on construction sites in Ontario. Many of those who have died were roofers. Roofers also suffer career-ending and life-altering injuries from falls.

That's the bad news. But here's the good news: There are some simple things you can do to protect yourself from a fall.

Ladder safety

You can fall before you even get to the roof. How you use your ladder makes all the difference.

Ladder safety starts from the ground up. Before you set up your extension ladder, inspect it. If any of the rungs or rails are bent, cracked, or damaged, don't use the ladder. The same goes for the feet and the pawls, which are critical for maintaining stability once the ladder is set up. If anything is damaged, write "Damaged! Do not use!" on a tag, put it on the ladder, and tell your supervisor.

When using ladders,

- ✓ check for overhead powerlines before carrying or setting up a ladder

- ✓ set the ladder up on firm, level ground
- ✓ extend the top of the ladder so that it goes at least 900 mm (about three rungs) above the landing (the roof edge)
- ✓ secure the top and bottom of the ladder
- ✓ when climbing up or down a ladder always face it, and use three-point contact (two feet and one hand, or two hands and one foot on the ladder at all times)
- ✓ don't carry anything when you're climbing; raise or lower material and equipment using a hoist or other method
- ✓ wait for the worker ahead of you to get off the ladder before you get on
- ✓ keep the areas at the top and bottom of the ladder clear of material, equipment, and debris.

Where can I get fall-arrest equipment?

Just about every safety equipment company sells a complete fall protection kit just for roofers. It usually contains everything you need to protect yourself from a fall—a harness, lanyard, lifeline, rope grab, and sloped-roof anchors. The anchors are designed to attach to the roof and support a lifeline.



These kits are inexpensive, so roofers and roofing companies can easily afford to be protected.

Where am I supposed to tie off?

Some roofers think that there's nowhere to tie off. That's simply



wrong. There are a number of options for tying off on a roof. Here are a couple of them:

- ✓ Nail a roof anchor (see photo below) at the peak of the roof.
- ✓ Loop a “safety strap” through openings in the roof sheathing onto the top chord of a roof truss.

How am I supposed to be protected while I’m attaching the first anchor?

Installing the first lifeline anchor doesn’t have to be dangerous. There are a number of ways to ensure you’re protected from a fall.

- ✓ Plan ahead. Arrange for a framer to leave openings in the roof sheathing so anchors can be attached inside the house and lifelines fed out through the opening.
- ✓ Install intermediate anchors as you move from the edge of the ladder to the peak. Use double lanyards to work your way to the top of the roof.
- ✓ Use a weighted throw line to toss a lifeline over the roof.



Attach it to a solid anchor on the other side of the house. Now you can attach your rope grab to this lifeline, **but only as temporary protection while you are installing the roof anchor.** Tie off to the roof anchor as soon as you have installed it. Never use this “throw line” method for ongoing fall protection while working on a roof.

Nailing it down

Here’s what to do when you’re installing the anchor.

- ✓ If you are using a manufactured product, follow the manufacturer’s installation instructions exactly.
- ✓ Position the anchors so that your lifeline will run straight down the roof. If you do fall, you don’t want to swing and hit something.
- ✓ You must have a separate lifeline for each worker on the roof.
- ✓ Put roofing materials and equipment in places that don’t interfere with the lifelines or other workers on the roof.
- ✓ Keep adjusting your rope grab so that you minimize the slack in your lifeline.

Once the anchor points are installed and the lifelines connected, you can get down to roofing. You’ll probably be able to do more, and be better at it, now that you have no worries about falling. ☺