

Preventing Falls of Workers through Skylights and Roof and Floor Openings

WARNING!

Fatal falls and serious injuries may result from inadequate guarding and fall protection for work around skylights and roof and floor openings.

WORKERS should take the following steps to protect themselves from falls through skylights and roof and floor openings:

- Never sit on, lean against, or step on a skylight or any covering placed over a hole in a roof or floor. The material may not support your weight.
- Guard or securely cover all holes you have created or uncovered before you leave the work area. Other workers might not notice an uncovered hole and fall through.
- Ask your supervisor for safety procedures to follow when covering or guarding a hole.
- Obtain fall protection information from your employer or from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) office (call 1-800-321-6742 or visit www.osha.gov).
- Always use a personal fall arrest system (PFAS) that includes a full-body harness, lanyard, connectors, and appropriate anchorage points (tie-offs) when working over an unguarded or uncovered opening more than 6 feet above a lower level—for example, while you are installing a skylight or ventilation unit in an opening that cannot be guarded or covered.
- If you use a PFAS, inspect it daily and report any damage or deficiencies to your supervisor. Tie off only to those anchorage points that your employer has identified as safe.
- Immediately tell your supervisor about any unguarded skylights, roof or floor openings, or other fall hazards in your workplace.
- Participate in all safety and health training programs offered by your employer.
- Follow safe work practices identified by your employer.
- Ask your employer for instructions if you do not know how to perform your job safely.
- If you are under age 16, do not perform any type of construction work; if you are under age 18, do not perform roofing work (including repair work) in any nonagricultural work setting. Note that certain exemptions exist

for student learners and apprentices. For more information about Federal child labor laws, visit www.dol.gov/dol/topic/youthlabor/index.htm; or call 1-866-4-USADOL. For links to State labor offices, visit www.ilsa.net or www.youthrules.dol.gov/states.htm; or call 1-866-4-USWAGE.

EMPLOYERS *should take the following measures to help prevent worker injuries and fatalities from falls through skylights and roof and floor openings:*

- Develop, implement, and enforce a comprehensive, written fall prevention program that, at a minimum, complies with applicable OSHA fall prevention standards.
- Assign a competent person* to inspect the worksite before work begins to identify fall hazards and to determine the appropriate fall prevention system for workers.
- For work around skylights and roof and floor openings, require, provide, and ensure the use of appropriate fall prevention systems that use one of the following:
 1. Covers or screens
 2. Railings or guardrails
 3. PFAS, including a full-body harness, lanyard, connectors, and appropriate anchorage points (tie-offs)

*According to OSHA, a competent person is one who (1) can identify existing and predictable hazards in the surroundings or working conditions that are unsanitary, hazardous, or dangerous to workers, and (2) is authorized to take prompt corrective measures to eliminate them [29 CFR 1926.32].

- Conduct periodic scheduled and unscheduled inspections to ensure that the fall prevention system is used and maintained correctly and provides adequate protection against falls.
- Train workers to recognize fall hazards associated with working near skylights and roof and floor openings.
- Train workers in the correct fall prevention procedures they are to follow.
- Comply with child labor laws. Do not permit workers under age 16 to perform any type of construction work. Do not permit workers under age 18 to perform roofing work (including repair work) in any nonagricultural work setting. Note that certain exemptions exist for student learners and apprentices. For information about Federal child labor laws, visit www.dol.gov/dol/topic/youthlabor/index.htm; or call 1-866-4-USADOL. For links to State labor offices, visit www.ilsa.net or www.youthrules.dol.gov/states.htm; or call 1-866-4-USWAGE. Information about OSHA regulations that apply to workers of all ages is available at www.osha.gov.

For additional information, see ***NIOSH Alert: Preventing Falls of Workers through Skylights and Roof and Floor Openings*** [DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2004-156]. Single copies of the Alert are available free from the following:

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