

Safety and health alert

20/09 Fall from roof results in workplace death

Incident

A self-employed roof plumber died after falling off the roof of a multi-storey apartment building. He had been at the site to repair a leak in the roof.

At the time of the incident, he was not using any kind of fall injury prevention system (FIPS). A FIPS is a system designed to arrest a person's fall from one level to another, and also it minimises the risk of injuries or harm during the fall. Fall injury prevention systems include restraint systems, fall-arrest systems, catch platforms, scaffolding, safety nets and safety mesh. The roof of the building had only a small parapet (approximately 250mm high) and did not feature any anchor points designed for attaching a FIPS.

The roof plumber had not completed a construction industry safety awareness training course.

Factors to consider

- The roof plumber was working at height (approximately 9 metres), close to the edge, where there was a risk of falling.
- The edge of the roof did not have adequate edge protection.
- The roof plumber was not using any kind of fall injury prevention system.

Recommendations

1. Persons conducting work at heights need to identify where there is a risk of falling from one level to another and assess the associated risks. This must be done before commencing the work.
2. Where there is a risk of falling, the employer, main contractor, self-employed person or person having control of the workplace must ensure that either edge protection is provided (top rail 900mm to 1100mm high, plus mid rail and toe board) or that a fall injury prevention system is provided and in operation.
3. If the building does not have anchorages for restraint or fall-arrest systems, then use a restraint or fall-arrest system that can attach to the parapet, doorframes, or other parts of the structure or other kinds of FIPS.
4. Employees or self-employed persons must not do construction work (which includes maintenance of a roof) unless they hold a current safety awareness training certificate.
5. Employers, main contractors or persons having control of the workplace must not permit an employee or self-employed person to do construction work unless the employee or self-employed person holds a current safety awareness training certificate.

Further information

- Code of Practice – Prevention of Falls at Workplaces
- Industry guidance document – Construction induction training

Further information can be obtained from WorkSafe's internet site www.worksafe.wa.gov.au or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email safety@commerce.wa.gov.au

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