

TOOLBOX TALK: ROOF WORK

Job or site _____

Date _____

Led by _____

Open with this

Before anybody goes up, we are going to name the three edges on this roof, the anchor each of us is using, and where the skylights are. Five minutes now, so nobody guesses later.

The talk

A steep roof, anything steeper than four in twelve, means fall protection at six feet with no alternative. Guardrails, nets or personal fall arrest. On a residential reroof that is almost always a harness, a rope grab and an anchor screwed into the ridge framing.

Low slope roofs, four in twelve or flatter, give you more options: a guardrail system, a safety net, a fall arrest system, or in some cases a warning line and a safety monitor away from the edge. The warning line is a real system with real spacing rules, not a chalk line and good intentions.

The anchor goes into structure, not sheathing. Half inch plywood will not hold five thousand pounds and it will not hold you. Ridge anchors are lagged into rafters or trusses, and the lags are the ones the manufacturer specifies, not whatever was in the truck.

Skylights kill people every year. From above, on a low slope roof, a skylight looks like part of the deck, especially under a new layer of felt or a light dusting of snow. A skylight is a hole. It gets a screen, a cover rated for twice the load, or a guardrail around it, before anybody walks the roof.

Weather decides more than any of us do. Frost on shingles in the morning, dew that has not burned off, wind over about twenty five miles an hour with sheet goods in your hands. Those are stop conditions. Nobody on this crew has to justify coming down.

And the way up and down. Ladder tied at the top, three feet past the eave, footed on solid ground. The last three feet of the climb, stepping from ladder to roof, is where a lot of it happens because that is the moment people let go with both hands.

Point at these before anybody starts

- The eave, the rakes and any valley edge where somebody will be working
- Every skylight, chimney chase, roof hatch and framed opening, named out loud

- The anchor points, and what structural member each one is fastened to
- The access ladder, tied at the top and extended three feet above the eave
- The ground below the work area, and where material and debris are landing
- The forecast for the next four hours, wind and rain and temperature

The rules that apply

- Steep roofs, steeper than 4 in 12, require conventional fall protection at 6 feet. There is no monitor only option.
- Low slope roofs allow guardrails, nets, fall arrest, or a warning line system used the way the standard describes.
- Anchors fasten to structural framing with the manufacturer's specified fasteners, never to sheathing alone.
- Skylights and roof openings are covered, screened or guarded before the roof is worked, and covers are secured and marked.
- Work stops for frost, ice, standing water, heavy rain or high wind, and nobody is questioned for calling it.
- The access ladder is tied off, extends 3 feet above the eave and sits on firm level ground.

Ask the crew

- Name your anchor. Which rafter is it in, and who set it?
- How many openings are in this roof, and has every one of them been covered?
- What is the wind doing this afternoon, and at what point do we come down?

Close with this

Anchors set, openings covered, ladder tied. If any one of those three is missing, the roof waits.

Attendance

Everybody who was present signs, including subcontractors and anybody visiting the site.

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This talk is general safety information for a crew briefing, not legal advice and not a substitute for the training your employees are required to have. Standards are quoted for orientation only. Check the current text of the standard and your own state plan, which may be stricter than the federal rule.