

TOOLBOX TALK #35

ROOFER FALLS 45 FEET THROUGH SKYLIGHT

A 29-year-old roofer was on a crew installing roofing insulation and skylights on a large industrial building. He had worked for his employer for 16 months. Another contractor's framing crew hand signaled the roofer and his co-worker to carry a sheet of plywood to cover a skylight hole.



The roofers selected an unsecured, approximately 4 by 8-foot sheet of plywood and lifted it at opposite ends. They had taken a half-step forward when the co-worker heard the roofer's end drop. He looked back but did not see the roofer, who had fallen 45 feet through a hole they did not know was under the plywood. The co-worker and his foreman ran downstairs and found the roofer unresponsive. Several workers who saw him fall called 911 and began CPR. First responders arrived but could not save him.

Investigators found that the roofers were not experienced or trained in skylight installation. They also found that visibility on the roof was impacted by bundles of insulation. The roofers were not using fall protection within warning lines where skylight holes were present. A boom lift basket, which had been moved from below the hole before the fall occurred, was being used as a fall-catch platform. This practice was against the manufacturer's safety guidelines.

The employer and crew lacked understanding of fall protection requirements for holes and the employer's fall protection work plan did not identify skylight holes as fall hazards.

To prevent similar occurrences, employers should:

- Provide fall protection guardrails, screens, covers, warning lines, safety nets or personal fall protection systems for roofers working around skylight openings and holes, and keep the area organized.
- Arrive onsite before work begins or appoint a supervisor to conduct a site hazard assessment with workers to identify fall hazards and develop protection methods and procedures in the fall protection work plan.
- During a pre-job safety meeting, review the site hazard assessment and fall protection work plan and emphasize workers' responsibilities to follow fall protection and roof safety requirements.