

# Safety Matters **Construction**

Provided by: Kentucky AGC Self-Insurers' Fund

## Safety Tips for Residential Roofing

Residential roofing refers to roofing services (e.g., installation, repair and maintenance) provided for properties and structures in which people live, especially homes. As an employee in this sector, you may conduct various tasks that could put your safety at risk, including working from heights, operating power tools, handling electrical equipment and being near power lines, coming in contact with hazardous substances, and encountering extreme weather conditions.

This article provides more information on common safety exposures in the residential roofing industry and offers best practices to help protect yourself.

### Working From Heights

When working on rooftops or other elevated locations, you are more susceptible to falls. In fact, the latest OSHA research found that falls are the leading cause of death in the construction industry, with falls from rooftops accounting for more than one-third (34%) of such fatalities. Consider the following guidelines to stay safe when working from heights:

- Familiarize yourself with any fall protection systems provided at the job site (e.g., safety nets, harnesses, guardrails, handrails, and fall restraint or arrest systems). Attend any training regarding the proper use of such systems. Do not start working from heights without these systems in place.
- Inspect ladders and scaffolding before and after use. Never utilize broken equipment.
- Place ladders on stable ground. Always face ladders when climbing them, keeping your body centered between the side rails and maintaining three-point contact.
- Make sure all extension ladders are locked prior to use.
- Do not exceed the maximum load rating of a ladder. This encompasses the total amount of weight a ladder can safely handle, including a person's weight and any tools or equipment they are using.
- Wear all required personal protective equipment (PPE) for the task at hand, including hard hats and close-toed boots with ample traction. Keep this PPE in good condition.
- Keep the work area clean. As it pertains to rooftops, sweep up debris and put away materials and tools after each shift to maintain full visibility of the area, thus mitigating the likelihood of slips and trips.
- Walk slowly and remain cautious when moving from one area to another. Never rush when working from heights. Be especially careful on slate and tile rooftops; they can pose greater slip hazards.
- Pay attention to all safety markings and warning signage at the job site. In particular, be on the lookout for labels indicating additional fall hazards on rooftops, such as vents or skylights.



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### Operating Power Tools

Without sufficient precautions in place, using power tools can easily lead to cuts, puncture wounds, musculoskeletal disorders, hearing loss and eye injuries. Utilize these tips to ensure power tool safety:

- Select the right power tool for the job. Using incorrect tools increases your risk of injury.
- Keep power tools in good condition and on a regular maintenance schedule to lower the likelihood of malfunctions.
- Inspect power tools before and after use for broken, missing or otherwise defective parts. Never operate damaged tools.
- Wear adequate PPE when using power tools, such as gloves, ear plugs and safety glasses. Take proper care of this PPE.
- Maintain good posture and avoid holding awkward positions for prolonged periods when operating power tools.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions regarding the correct handling of power tools.

### Handling Electrical Equipment and Working Near Power Lines

Using electrical equipment and working in close proximity to power lines can heighten your risk of experiencing electrical shock and burns—injuries that could prove fatal. According to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the construction industry contributes to more than half (52%) of all workplace electrical fatalities. Follow these measures to uphold electrical safety at the job site:

- Inspect electrical equipment before and after use. Don't use damaged equipment.

- Wear insulated PPE when handling electrical equipment. Keep this PPE in good condition.
- Assess cords and outlets prior to plugging in electrical equipment. Never use frayed or discolored cords or cracked, melted or sparking outlets. Additionally, refrain from overloading outlets.
- Don't yank on electrical cords when unplugging equipment. Instead, try to pull on cords as gently as possible.
- Take adequate care of electrical equipment by conducting routine maintenance and repairs as needed.
- Store electrical equipment in designated areas, keeping cords tidy and away from high-traffic locations.
- Refer to the manufacturer's instructions to ensure proper use of electrical equipment.
- Keep electrical equipment at least 5 feet away from wet areas and liquids at all times.
- Look for nearby power lines before working from heights. Always stay at least 10 feet away from power lines.
- Take note of and comply with all electrical safety signage displayed at the worksite.

### Coming in Contact With Hazardous Substances

Certain roofing operations may expose you to harmful substances, such as asbestos, chemicals and paint fumes. Coming in contact with these substances could lead to skin and eye irritation and respiratory complications. Implement these protocols to stay safe when working with or near hazardous substances:

- Avoid touching or inhaling harmful substances whenever possible.

- Confirm that the job site has adequate ventilation before starting a task involving hazardous substances.
- Wear sufficient PPE when coming in contact with harmful substances, including safety overalls, a face shield and a respirator. Take good care of this PPE.
- Attend any training regarding proper chemical storage and handling. Be prepared to respond to chemical spills or splashes.
- Ensure chemicals are correctly labeled and stored in secure containers. Watch for cracked or leaky containers. Always return chemicals to their designated storage areas after use.
- Refer to the label instructions regarding the safe use of a chemical. Open and close chemical containers carefully and be especially cautious when pouring these substances to avoid chemical spills or splashes.
- Follow appropriate cleanup procedures after working with or near harmful substances.
- Dress appropriately for the weather. This may entail wearing multiple layers in cold temperatures, selecting light and breathable clothing on hot days, or opting for waterproof gear when rain is in the forecast.
- Stay hydrated and well nourished by drinking plenty of water and consuming healthy snacks throughout your shift.
- Take periodic breaks from the elements—whether it's in the shade or indoors—to maintain a safe body temperature and avoid becoming overly hot or cold.
- Slow down and exercise extra caution in wet conditions, particularly if you are working from heights.
- Refrain from overexerting yourself amid extreme weather conditions and know the signs of heat-related illnesses, hypothermia and frostbite so you can respond accordingly.

### Encountering Extreme Weather Conditions

Working outdoors could leave you vulnerable to adverse weather conditions, such as rain, snow, and extreme heat and cold. These conditions could increase your likelihood of slips and trips, heat-related illnesses, frostbite and hypothermia. Leverage these safeguards to protect yourself amid such conditions:

- Pay attention to the weather forecast before each shift. Consult your supervisor to determine whether it's safe to work in current conditions.

### Conclusion

Overall, residential roofing presents a variety of safety exposures. By understanding these risks and implementing the necessary precautions, you can avoid injuries on the job.

Contact your supervisor for more safety guidance.