



LOSS CONTROL HAZARD ALERT

Fall Hazards from Skylights

A serious safety hazard that has resulted in a number of deaths and injuries this year; falls through skylights. Most safety professionals agree that working on or near unprotected roof top skylights is dangerous and the fall hazard is often ignored or unrecognized.

Most skylight coverings are plastic or fiberglass and provide little resistance to impact, especially when a worker falls on to it. While appearing sturdy, these coverings could provide a false sense of protection to those working on or near them. Workers have been injured or killed by either falling through unprotected skylights or when the skylight is removed leaving an unguarded roof opening. While new skylight installations are now often equipped with screens or other barriers to prevent falls and unauthorized entry, most existing skylights are not so equipped.

Cal OSHA regulations also require that all "Floor, roof and skylight openings shall be guarded by either temporary railings and toe-boards or by covers." What should you do?

- ⇒ Employers should ensure that all employees required to work near roof skylights or other openings are trained not only to recognize the fall hazards including the danger of sitting or stepping on skylights but also in the steps they need to take to safely work around these hazards. This should be done as part of your fall prevention program.
- ⇒ Install barriers, guards, or other positive fall protection systems to protect employees when working in proximity to these openings. Underside screens or other barriers capable of withstanding at least a 200 pound force should be installed to prevent workers from falling through the skylight or other roof opening. Since a worker's vision may be obstructed by carrying tools or materials or when walking backwards, simply warning them of the fall hazards is not sufficient.
- ⇒ Prior to the start of the job and each workday, site supervisors should recognize, assess, and implement appropriate fall prevention and protection methods. Supervisors also need to educate workers of the fall hazards and review the safe work practices, equipment, and personal fall protection that may be needed to avoid injuries. This can be done as part of a daily jobsite meeting with all exposed employees.

Falls through skylights and other openings can be prevented when employers recognize their responsibilities to identify these hazards, implement appropriate fall protection measures and train workers on job specific safe work practices. The danger of skylights should not be ignored. You may visit the following web sites for further information:

- ◆ [National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health \(NIOSH\): Preventing Worker Deaths and Injuries from Falls Through Skylights and Roof Openings](#)
- ◆ [Occupational Safety & Health Administration \(OSHA\)](#)
- ◆ [CA Occupational Safety & Health Administration \(Cal OSHA\)](#)

Everest Loss Control offers services to help you in your loss prevention efforts. If you would like more information about these services, www.everestregroup.com.

CONTACT US:

Loss Control Department

Phone: 908-604-3000

Fax: 908-604-3526

E-mail: losscontrol@everestre.com

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