



SafetyCulture > Topics > Safety > Roof Safety

Roof Safety

Learn about the importance of roof safety, how to identify and eliminate

SafetyCulture



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What is Roof Safety?

Roof safety is a system of preventive and safety measures when performing work and repairs on rooftops. Roof safety should be practiced while on the job to avoid personal injuries and structural damage.

Performing roof work exposes workers to risks such as falls, which are the leading cause of death in the construction industry. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) cites that falls from roofs account for 34% of all fall deaths.

5 Common Rooftop Safety Hazards



5 Common Roof Safety Hazards

To protect roofers, contractors, and [subcontractors](#) from serious injury and death it is important to identify hazards when working on rooftops and to follow critical safety steps to control these hazards. Below are the most common rooftop hazards that should be identified and controlled to keep roofers safe:

- **Roof Safety Hazard #1: Fall Hazards**

Always watch out for fall hazards when working at heights and prepare yourself with the right [harnessing](#) and [fall protection](#) gear before working. Basic questions to ask yourself and your team should be: Is the structure strong enough to support the weight? Are there holes to watch out for? Are guardrails available for workers? Are ladders properly placed and not defective? Use an [inspection checklist](#) to ask the right questions and assess fall hazards when working from heights.

- **Roof Safety Hazard #2: Power Tools**

Power tools are essential when working on rooftops. However, if improperly used at heights, power tools can inflict serious damage to workers as well as cause slips and

falls. Ensure your team is properly trained to [handle power tools](#) and that they are not defective.

• **Roof Safety Hazard #3: Electricity**

The construction industry is most at risk from electrical hazards, accounting for 52% of all electrical fatalities in the [US workplace](#). Workers most at risk of [electrical hazards](#) include those working on rooftops and near power lines. Improper handling of electrical equipment can cause massive electrical shock, burns, fires, and death. Conduct regular [electrical safety checks](#) to identify and control possible causes of electrocution to prevent accidents.

• **Roof Safety Hazard #4: Hazardous substances**

Common hazardous substances when working on rooftops include exposure to asbestos, paint fumes, and harmful chemicals. Check for substances that may harm workers on-site and take appropriate action including [proper storage and safe handling of hazardous substances](#).

• **Roof Safety Hazard #5: Extreme temperatures**

Whether it's the heat of torches used for roofing or extremes in weather, workers must be protected from the dangers of extreme temperature by identifying the risks brought by equipment or current weather conditions. Have your team perform a [toolbox talk](#) before your shift to decide whether you should commence work for the day.

It is imperative that rooftop hazards be identified to minimize the risk of accidents. You can use [SafetyCulture's free digital checklists](#) to conduct your hazard identification assessments and take immediate action before accidents happen.

Personal Protective Equipment for Working on a Roof

Employers have a duty to protect workers from recognized hazards. Depending on the associated hazards, some of the PPE that may be required for working on a roof can include, but are not limited to:

- non-slip footwear
- hard hat
- gloves

- eye protection like safety glasses and visors
 - hearing protection like earplugs and muffs
 - fall protection like safety harnesses and lanyards
 - respiratory protection
 - wet weather gear
-

Roof Safety Signs and Their Meaning

According to [OSHA](#), safety signs are generally categorized into three types—danger signs, warning signs, and caution signs. When working on rooftops, roofers will usually encounter the following examples of roof safety signs and what they should do:

Danger Sign

When there is a roof safety danger sign, there are immediate hazardous conditions that will lead to serious injury and death if not avoided. Upon seeing this sign before any roofing work, avoid it at all costs.

Warning Sign

When there is a roof safety warning sign, there are existing life-threatening hazards that can lead to serious injury or death. Accessing roofs by permit means that only authorized personnel or trained employees can be on them. Warning signs represent a hazard level between danger and caution, needing specific precautionary measures to be taken.

Caution Sign

When there is a roof safety caution sign, there are minor hazard situations where a non-immediate or potential hazard or unsafe practice presents a lesser threat of employee injury. Roofers should be mindful of caution signs and apply necessary control measures in any roofing work.

Top 10 Roofing Safety Tips

1. **Always begin with your Pre-Start Talk**

Make sure you always conduct a 5-10 minute pre-start talk with all workers before commencing work on a rooftop. Discuss common hazards present (like the common hazards above), assess the condition of the work area, confirm that proper permits have been secured, and encourage the team to verbalize the safety tips to follow. Using a [pre-start toolbox talk template](#) can help your team communicate and record their daily safety conversations.

2. **Work only during good weather conditions and avoid extreme heat/cold**

Not only does extreme weather cause slips and falls, but it can also hinder the proper execution of roofing work (roof shingles not sealing down). A wet roof is also a huge risk for slips and falls. Better side with caution and always wait for ideal weather before you begin roofing work.

3. **Ladders should be stable and properly secured or tied off**

Always make sure that there are enough ladders and [scaffolding](#) for the job and that they're all safe to use. [Check your ladders for safety](#) as some of them may need repair or replacement to prevent fatal accidents or injuries.

4. **Wear proper PPE**

Wearing proper PPE such as helmets, shoes with traction, and fall protection harnesses can help save you when slips and falls occur. Perform [regular PPE checks](#) to ensure your team is properly equipped.

5. **Carefully position ropes and extension cords so they're not underfoot**

When not properly handled, ropes and cords not only hinder workers' movements, they can also cause fatal accidents. Always follow proper use of ropes, cords, and [safety harnesses](#).

6. **Sweep the roof before and after work and make sure it is clear of dirt and debris**

One random nail can cause slips while snow or leaves can hide areas of the roof that should be visible to workers. Always keep the roof clean and free of items that can cause accidents or materials that can hinder the visibility of the roof.

7. **Use guardrails whenever possible**

Guardrails serve as a visual and physical barrier that protects workers from falls. It reduces the risk of injury and death from working on roofs.

8. **Skylights should be guarded appropriately**

Skylights and other openings on roofs should be properly covered and labeled with visible warning signs to prevent workers from leaning on or falling into them.

9. **Be careful of slate and tile roofs**

Slate and tile roofing is a major slip hazard. Always make sure that workers are properly trained and have enough experience to work on slate and tile roofs.

10. Signage should be visible in your work area

People around the work area should always be made aware of roofing work in the vicinity by using visible warning signs to prevent injury or accidents with staff working on-site or from falling debris.

Create Your Own Rooftop Safety Checklist

Eliminate manual tasks and streamline your operations.

Get started for free

Roof Safety Topics for Meetings

As the topmost safety precaution for working on roofs, pre-start talks should be performed. Listed below are sample roof safety topics for meetings prior to commencing roofing work:

- Working with Skylights and Roof Openings
- Basic Roof Housekeeping Standards
- Demonstrating the Proper Operation of Roof Cutters and Power Brooms
- Safety Measures for Job-built Ladders
- Identifying Potential Heat Illnesses and How to Avoid Them
- Pre-use Checks for Specific Roofing Equipment
- Proactively Preventing Horseplay to Avoid Slips, Trips, and Falls

You should now be familiar with the common rooftop safety hazards and basic steps to follow to improve safety in your workplace. Explore how using a digital inspection app like [SafetyCulture \(formerly iAuditor\)](#) can help you keep improving rooftop safety in your workplace.

Reduce the Risk of Accidents When Working at Heights with a Roof Inspection Software

A roof inspection software is a digital tool used by safety inspectors in the construction industry during [rooftop safety assessments](#). It's primarily used to identify safety hazards and non-compliance with safety protocols while working at heights so measures can be taken to prevent accidents.

Rooftop inspections play a critical role in ensuring worker safety and productivity. According to the data gathered by the NIOSH [Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation program](#), 42% of construction industry fatalities from 1982 to 2015 were from falls. Considering the dire consequences of subpar safety protocols, it is important that construction firms invest in ensuring the safety of their workers.

With the SafetyCulture Roof Inspection Software, safety inspectors can take advantage of intuitive digital templates to improve the efficiency of walkthrough inspections and use automatic report generation to improve awareness and visibility within the organization. Here are the upsides of using SafetyCulture as your roof inspection software:

- **Save time**

Traditional pen-and-paper templates require manual data entry and compiling inspection data to create a comprehensive report takes up even more time.

SafetyCulture's roof inspection software lets you generate comprehensive professional reports immediately after completing your inspection so you can spend more time collecting data instead of compiling them.

- **Save energy**

Aside from automatic report generation, data from each inspection is automatically saved to the cloud where authorized personnel can easily access them from a mobile device or desktop. Apply filters such as department, employee, template name, time, and date to get the information you need without sorting through a stack of papers. Say goodbye to manual data sorting and long hours spent drafting a comprehensive report. SafetyCulture has you covered.

- **Save space**

Roof inspections must be done regularly, which means inspection data and reports easily pile up. This can contribute to desk clutter if left unattended, and cabinets full of paper reports when organized. Either way, paper reports will take up a lot of useful workspaces. SafetyCulture's roof inspection software saves all of your inspection data via unlimited cloud storage so authorized personnel can access them through their mobile device or desktop without contributing to office clutter.

- **Improve accountability**

Easily track assigned inspections and corrective actions to ensure that tasks are being done on time. Assigned personnel will receive push notifications and reminders for

scheduled inspections and upcoming due dates for corrective actions. Apply mandatory fields and require digital signatures in inspection templates to make sure that workers adhere to set protocols.

- **Promote visibility**

The useful insights provided by web analytics promote visibility by showing management where the team is doing well and which aspects of the operation need improvement. Get a 360-degree view of your performance and create an action plan to maximize your team's potential with the help of web analytics.

SafetyCulture can also be used to provide [Training](#) on safety procedures to follow. By having the relevant safety learning modules on-hand anytime and anywhere, inspectors and project managers can better ensure the safety of their workers.

The occupational hazards involved in working at heights can be fatal, and it's the safety inspectors' job to ensure that these risks are minimized by enforcing strict adherence to safety protocols. With the help of the SafetyCulture roof inspection checklist, achieving and maintaining an effective safety program in your organization just became easier.

SafetyCulture Marketplace: Your One-Stop Work Gear & Equipment Shop

Improve safety in your workplace with [SafetyCulture Marketplace](#) as your one-stop shop for all work gear and equipment needs. Get on-demand access to top quality and specialized work gear from trusted equipment brands in the industry—all in one centralized location. Raise the bar of safety and efficiency by empowering employees to request what they need with just a few taps, anytime and anywhere!

FAQs About Roof Safety

What do roofers use for safety?

Does OSHA require harnesses on roofs?

What are the most common roofing accidents?

What are the basic requirements for a roof?

Improving Roof Safety

Roof Inspection Checklists

Always begin roof work with a toolbox talk to mitigate possible roofing risks. Discuss and inspect possible hazards associated with work at the site and resolved safety issues.

[Learn More](#)

SafetyCulture Content Specialist

Jona Tarlengco

Jona Tarlengco is a content writer and researcher for SafetyCulture since 2018. She usually writes about safety and quality topics, contributing to the creation of well-researched articles. Her 5-year experience in one of the world's leading business news organisations helps enrich the quality of the information in her work.

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