

Fall protection for roof work

This information sheet details new risk controls when installing roofs on housing construction sites.

April 2011

Background

Falls are a leading cause of injury in the construction industry. Even from a relatively low height, a fall can cause death or injury such as fracture, spinal cord injury, concussion and brain damage.

The most common falls are from using unsafe or incomplete scaffolds, inappropriate ladders/ladder use, falling from or through roofs, falls from trucks, falls into holes, pits or shafts, and accessing mezzanine areas.

As fall protection systems have improved in terms of the cost, availability and range, what is considered reasonably practicable, in controlling the risk of falls, has also changed.

What's changed?

There is specific guidance on roof installation work outlined in the Code of Practice, *Prevention of falls in housing construction* that are no longer considered an acceptable way to achieve compliance.

WorkSafe expects the new risk controls for roof work on housing construction outlined in the table below to be followed.

WorkSafe considers it reasonably practicable for risk controls to be implemented by:

- 1 August 2011 for external fall protection or
- 1 January 2012 for truss and batten erection.

| Current requirements | New requirements |
|--|---|
| Truss and batten erection | |
| Roof trusses and battens should be spaced no more than 900mm centres to reduce the risk of internal falls. | If internal fall protection cannot be provided, truss and batten spacing should be reduced to minimise the risk of internal falls by one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ if truss spacing does not exceed 600mm centres, the batten spacing must not exceed 900mm centres ▪ if truss spacing is greater than 600mm but not exceeding 900mm centres, the batten spacing must not exceed 450mm centres. If truss spacing exceeds 900mm and batten spacing exceeds 450, other fall protection must be provided. |
| Roofing tasks | |
| A system of physical fall protection should be provided under any of the following circumstances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ where a worker may be exposed to the risk of a fall greater than three metres ▪ where a two metre clear zone cannot be established ▪ where the two metre clear zone is no longer being maintained ▪ the pitch of the roof is greater than the critical angle. | Where there is a risk of a fall from a height of two metres or more, implement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ External fall protection in the form of physical edge protection (eg guardrailing or perimeter scaffolding). |

Note: This guidance material has been prepared using the best information available to the Victorian WorkCover Authority and should be used for general use only. Any information about legislative obligations or responsibilities included in this material is only applicable to the circumstances described in the material. You should always check the legislation referred to in this material and make your own judgement about what action you may need to take to ensure you have complied with the law. Accordingly, the Victorian WorkCover Authority cannot be held responsible and extends no warranties as to the suitability of the information for your specific circumstances; or actions taken by third parties as a result of information contained in the guidance material.

Further information
 Please visit worksafe.vic.gov.au or call the WorkSafe Advisory Service **9641 1444** or freecall **1800 136 089**.

Related WorkSafe Publications
 Code of Practice, *Prevention of Falls in Housing Construction*, 2004 (sections 6.6 and 6.9.1)
National Code of Practice for the prevention of Falls in Housing Construction, 2010