

DIS/DL&I

FACE-90-03

DATE: NOVEMBER 13, 1990

**TO:** Division of Safety Research  
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

**FROM:** Division of Industrial Safety, Massachusetts Department  
of Labor and Industries

**SUBJECT:** Roofer Dies After Falling From A Flat Roof

#### **SUMMARY**

A 34 year old male roofer, employed by a subcontractor, fell to his death while working on the flat roof of a two story residence. The victim was a Deputy Sheriff Correction Officer working part time as a roofer. He was part of a two person crew applying 4x8 sheets of insulation to the roof. While he was butting the sheets together near the unguarded edge of the roof, he stepped backwards over the edge and fell to he sidewalk. The Department Of Labor And Industries investigators concluded that in order to prevent future similar occurrence, employers should:

- inform workers of the hazards of falling while working on unguarded flat roofs;
- develop implement and enforce safety programs and policies regarding the hazards associated with working on roofs, and
- ensure employees use proper fall protection equipment whenever the possibility of a serious fall exists.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

On July 18, 1990, a 34 year old male roofer died after falling approximately 30 feet from a float roof to the concrete sidewalk. A city Medial Examiner notified the Massachusetts Department of Labor and Industries of the death via the FACE Hotline the same day. On July 26, 1990, a Division of Industrial Safety, investigator visited and photographed the incident site, obtained Police, Ambulance Service and Medical Examiner reports and interviewed the employer.

The employer, a subcontractor, has been in the roofing business for more than 5 years. He did not have a written safety policy or safety procedures. Safety meetings were not conducted either on or off the job site. He had two employees on this job site. The victim worked only two days a week as a roofer. The victim had been employed by the employer part-time for approximately two years.

## **INVESTIGATION**

The victim was working with a co-worker installing 4x8 sheets of insulation material on the deck of a flat roof. They were working near the front edge of the 2 1/2 story multiple residence with a concrete front sidewalk. With his back to the unguarded edge of the roof, the victim was placing the edge of the sheet of insulation against the end of a sheet previously placed on the roof. Not realizing that he was close to the unguarded edge of the roof, he stepped backwards and fell approximately 30 feet to the concrete sidewalk. The co-worker did not witness the fall.

The incident occurred at 9:50 a.m. Police and Emergency Medical Services were summoned and arrived four minutes later. The EMS report shows the victim was unconscious, in respiratory arrest and was bleeding from the ears, eyes, nose and mouth. The victim's head, neck and back were immobilized and he was transported to the hospital. CPR was provided en route to the hospital. The victim was pronounced dead at 10:30 a.m. that day.

## **CAUSE OF DEATH**

The medical examiner listed cause of death as multiple traumatic injuries.

## **RECOMMENDATION/DISCUSSION**

Recommendation #1: Employers should ensure that employees are made aware of the hazards associated with working near unguarded edges of flat roofs (454 CMR 10.25.7)

Discussion: The employer should provide training on how to safely apply insulation and roofing materials at the edges of flat roofs.

Recommendation #2: Employers should develop, implement and enforce a safety policy and program regarding the hazards associated with working on roofs (454 CMR 10.03.d).

Discussion: Employers should develop comprehensive safety programs which include training of employees and scheduled and unscheduled safety inspections.

Recommendation #3: Employers should ensure that employees use appropriate personal fall protection equipment whenever the possibility of a serious fall exists.

Discussion: Employers should implement 454 CMR 10.03.1.E which requires the use of a lifeline and safety harness or life net by employees exposed to the hazard of falling more than 25 feet above land.

## **REFERENCES**

1. Massachusetts Department of Labor and Industries, Division of Industrial Safety, 454 CMR 10.00, Rules and Regulations for the Prevention of Accidents in Construction Operations, state House Bookstore, 1988.
2. 29 CFR 1926.450 Code of Federal Regulations. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, Office of the Federal Register.

## **NAMES:**

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