

WORKER SAFETY ON PITCHED ROOFS



Worker safety is important on any construction job site. Pitched roofs are no exception. There are several factors that contribute to avoidable accidents while installing structural wood panel roofs. This Builder Tip from APA – *The Engineered Wood Association* describes those factors and simple precautions that can improve the safety of working conditions on roofs.

First, it is important to understand the factors that can contribute to accidents.

- 1. Pitch of roof.** The steeper the pitch, the more difficult it is for workers to maintain their footing without additional safety protection.
- 2. Moisture.** Rain, snow or frost may cause slippery surface conditions on roofs.
- 3. Sawdust and dirt on the roof surface.** If workers cut and trim panels on the roof, they may leave sawdust on the roof surface. Sawdust or dirt particles may cause slippery conditions on roof surfaces.
- 4. Footwear.** The traction of shoes or boots varies with the type of material used on the soles. A worker who wears shoes or boots with poor traction is at greater risk of slipping on the roof deck.
- 5. Tripping Hazards.** Tools, electric cords, articles of clothing, etc., can contribute to a tripping hazard.

Safety Recommendations

You can address these roof safety factors with the following precautions:

- 1. Tie-off.** On steeply pitched roofs, make sure that roof workers wear an approved safety belt and that they are securely tied off to a fall-resistant device. Even a roof which is not steeply pitched may require such safety devices if the risk of serious injury or death is present because of the distance of any fall or for other reasons.
- 2. Avoid working on wet roofs.** If a roof is slippery from rain, snow or frost, the best precaution is to wait until the roof surface is dry. If work must continue, consider additional safety precautions, such as tying off workers and using special roof shoes with skid-resistant cleats.
- 3. Keep the roof surface clean.** Keep a dust brush or broom handy to sweep the roof to remove any loose sawdust, particles, or dirt.
- 4. Wear rubber-soled shoes or boots.** Rubber-soled boots typically provide better traction than leather-soled boots. Some crepe-soled boots also have good traction. Regardless of sole type, workers should not wear shoes or boots that have worn soles or heels. Special roofer's boots with small, skid-resistant metal cleats are also available.

5. Use skid-resistant side of APA

Performance Rated Panels. Frequently, Oriented Strand Board (OSB) panels are textured or splatter-coated on one side to increase traction on the panel surface. When installing OSB panels on a roof, make sure that the skid-resistant side is up.

6. Install asphalt shingle underlayment or roofing felt. Cover the roof sheathing as soon as possible to minimize exposure to weather. Asphalt shingle underlayment and roofing felt also increase slip resistance on sloped roofs.

7. Install temporary wood cleats for toe-holds. Nail 2x4 wood cleats to the roof deck to provide temporary toe-holds for workers. The cleats can be removed as roofing is installed.

8. Inspect for and remove tripping hazards. Tools, electric cords and other loose items can all pose hazards and should be removed from the roof.

In addition to following these precautions, **comply with OSHA fall-protection standards and always check your local and state worker-safety requirements.** Builders are responsible for following code and safety requirements and providing safe working conditions for their crews. It's also important to always be alert to potential hazards and practice common sense.

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