



FALL PROTECTION ON FLAT ROOFS

Fall protection is required for ALL work that presents a fall hazard over 9.6 feet, or less when there is something hazardous below (e.g. impalement hazard) that could cause injury if the worker fell. The same legislation applies to all roofs, regardless of the pitch of the roof. The rules are the same on flat roofs as they are on roofs with a 14/14 pitch. In addition to falling off the edge, workers can fall through other openings on a flat roof, including the roof hatch, sky lights, etc.

The only exception may be when one or two maintenance workers are walking directly to a mechanical unit for a few minutes, then returning the same path, which must be several feet from the edge. Once workers are doing more than that, it becomes a 'project' and fall protection must be put in place. We have not yet assessed all roofs on campus for mechanical work, and this will be covered with all workers again in toolbox talks over the next couple of weeks.

The Department of Labour cracked down on work on flat roofs the last two years and have eliminated (grandfathered out) the “stay back six/ten feet” control measures they used to allow contractors to use on flat roofs. Nova Scotia legislation does not allow control zones nor bump lines (like other provinces do).

DoL used to allow roof workers the ability to determine a fall hazard and stay back from it, but incidents show that contractors push it, and workers are going the edge “only for a couple seconds” to perform a task. I’ve seen it on campus myself a few times. It takes less than one second to fall off a roof and die, and stats show the workers are typically young, and the roofs are usually flat and between 10 and 15 feet high. Flat roofs seem to cause complacency amongst workers, which has resulted in too many workplace fatalities or crippling injuries.

NS Fall Protection Hierarchy (#1 is the safest, #3 is the least safe)

1. Temporary Guardrails
2. Travel Restraint (1,000 lb. anchor point required) - no chance of falling.
3. Fall Arrest (5,000 lb. anchor point required) - arrests a fall.

These rules pertain to contractors as well, and please keep in mind that a lot of contractors are not aware of these 'new' requirements or choose not to follow them. We, of course, do not allow that at StFX because Fall Protection is one of our Safety Absolutes.

These 'new' rules have definitely caused some issues for roofing contractors, but the fall protection technology is out there to make this easier (and safer) than it used to be, so there needs to be a willingness to see what is now available to achieve fall protection and look at doing things differently than in the past.

Remember: "We've Always Done It That Way" are dangerous words.