



What can roofers do?

Fall protection for sloped roofing

Do you feel perfectly safe working on a roof without fall protection? Do you think the soles of your boots are enough to prevent you from falling?

Each year, Ontario workers die as a result of falls and too many of them are roofers. Many roofers also suffer career-ending and life-altering injuries from falls. The good news is that there are some simple things you can do to protect yourself from a fall.

Ladder safety

Even before you get up on the roof of a building, you can fall. How you use your ladder to get up there makes all the difference. Ladder safety starts from the ground up.

Before using a ladder, it's important to conduct a hazard assessment to ensure it's the safest means of access and a safe surface to work from to perform the task. Some minimal work can be done from a ladder, like securing the top of the ladder or installing your first anchor point. IHSA has created a *Ladder Use in Construction Guideline* (ihsa.ca/pdfs/topics/ladders.pdf) that can help you determine when using a ladder is appropriate.

Before you set up your ladder, inspect it. If one of the rungs or rails is bent, cracked, or damaged, don't use the ladder. Also inspect the footpads and pawls (or dogs) for damage. They are critical for maintaining stability once the ladder is set up. If the ladder is not in working order, write "Damaged! Do not use!" on a tag, put it on the ladder, and tell your supervisor or employer.

Safe practices when using ladders:

- Check for overhead powerlines before carrying or setting up a ladder.
- Set up the ladder on firm, level ground.
- Extend the top of the ladder so that it goes at least 900 mm (about three rungs) above the landing or roof edge.
- Secure the top and bottom of the ladder.
- When climbing up or down a ladder, always face it and use three-point contact—keep two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand on the ladder at all times.

Securing the top of the ladder or installing your first anchor point can be done from a ladder if a hazard assessment is done.



Sloped-roof anchors are designed to attach to the roof and support a lifeline.



You can nail a roof anchor at the peak of the roof.

- Don't carry anything when you're climbing. Raise or lower material and equipment using a hoist or other method.
- Wait for the worker ahead of you to get off the ladder before you get on it.
- Keep the areas at the top and bottom of the ladder clear of material, equipment, and debris.

2. Install intermediate anchors as you move from the edge of the ladder to the peak of the roof. Use double lanyards to work your way to the top of the roof.
3. If you have developed other methods, it's a good idea to do a hazard assessment and keep it on site. It will show the MOL that you have considered all the hazards and chose the best way to perform the work.

Fall-arrest equipment

Just about every safety equipment company sells a complete fall protection kit made specifically for roofers. It usually contains everything you need to protect yourself from a fall—a harness, lanyard, lifeline, rope grab, and sloped-roof anchors. These kits are inexpensive, so roofers and roofing companies can afford to be protected.

Tying off

Some roofers believe that there is nowhere for them to tie off. That simply isn't true. There are several options for tying off on a roof. For example, you can nail a roof anchor at the peak of the roof or loop an anchorage connector through openings in the roof sheathing onto the top chord of a roof truss.

Installing anchors

Sloped-roof anchors are designed to attach to the roof and support a lifeline. Installing the lifeline anchors doesn't have to be dangerous. There are a number of ways to ensure you're protected from a fall while installing anchors.

1. On new construction, plan ahead. Arrange for a framer to leave openings in the roof sheathing so anchors can be attached inside the house and lifelines can be fed out through the opening.

Safe practices for installing roof anchors:

- If you are using a manufactured product, follow the manufacturer's installation instructions exactly.
- Position the anchors so that your lifeline will run straight down the roof. This way, if you happen to fall, you won't swing and hit something.
- Make sure you have a separate anchor and lifeline for each worker on the roof.
- Put roofing materials and equipment in places that don't interfere with the lifelines or with other workers on the roof.
- Keep adjusting your rope grab so that you minimize the slack in your lifeline.

Unsafe roofs

Another hazard that roofers face is falling through the roof. Sometimes sheathing rots and loses its strength. This damage isn't always apparent if the shingles are still on. If a roofer were to step or stand in that area, the sheathing could give way and the roofer could fall. A visual inspection of the underside of the roof through an access hatch may help avoid the hazard.

Once the anchor points are installed and the lifelines are connected, you can get down to the business of roofing. You'll probably be able to do more and be better at it if you're not so worried about falling. Working safely just makes good business sense. For more information about preventing falls, visit the **Fall Prevention** topic page at ihsa.ca/topics_hazards