

SAFETY MANAGEMENT SERVICES

CONSTRUCTION SAFETY BREAKS

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

LOCATION: _____

YOUR SAFETY CONCERNS: _____

DISCUSSION LEADER: _____

Today's Topic: Fall Protection on Low-Sloped Roofs

The three systems known as “conventional” fall protection in construction are guardrails, personal fall arrest systems (PFAS), and safety nets. However, warning line systems are one more way we can prevent a fall hazard for our workers when working on low-sloped roofs. In 2000, OSHA issued an interpretation letter regarding the use of warning line systems by employees who were not involved with roofing, pre-cast, or leading edge work. It's important to understand how to properly use warning lines so as to stay safe.

Discussion: When are warning lines allowed in lieu of other fall protection, and what precautions should we take when they are in use on our jobsite?

The Risks: Falls

Construction is a high-hazard industry for those who work in it, with falls at the top of the hazards list. Falls from roofs are one specific concern at construction sites and were the most frequent cause of fatalities for construction in 2007. In fact, every year, falls are the most frequent cause of fatalities at construction sites; they account for one of every three construction-related deaths. According to fatality data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) in 2007, there were 835 deaths from falls in all industries combined—442 of those fatalities were from the construction industry!

Solution: Know the Proper Procedures

According to OSHA’s letter of interpretation for low-sloped roofs, the following requirements need to be met if you want to use warning lines in lieu of other types of fall protection:

- A warning line is at a distance of 15 feet or more from the leading edge;
- The warning line meets or exceeds the OSHA standards (explanation below);
- No work or work-related activity is to take place outside the warning lines; and
- The employer effectively implements a work rule prohibiting the employees from going beyond the warning line.

When working on a flat roof, warning lines are to be set back 15 feet from the edges. The warning lines have to meet the criteria in 1926.502(f)(2), which includes:

- The rope, wire, or chain shall be flagged at no more than 6-foot intervals with high-visibility material.
- The rope, wire, or chain has to be between 34-39 inches above the walking/working surface.
- After being erected with either rope, wire, or chain attached, stanchions shall be capable of resisting 16 lbs of force.
- The rope, wire, or chain shall have a minimum tensile strength of 500 lbs.
- The line shall be attached at each stanchion in such a way that pulling on one section of the line between stanchions will not result in slack being used in adjacent sections before the stanchion tips over.

Note: Caution tape is not allowed as a warning line for fall protection!

If your work area allows for the set-up of warning lines, following the above-listed requirements will both provide for compliance and ensure that workers are kept safe from fall hazards.

Never risk working outside the warning lines!

What is the minimum distance warning signs need to be placed away from a leading edge?

List the criteria all warning lines have to meet when considering use.
