Roofing (Heat) Hazards Stats and Facts

FACTS

1. Asphalt kettles are used to heat asphalt to its working temperature of between 190 and 218 C, or 374 to 424 F (refer to manufacturer’s specifications regarding temperature). Those who work with asphalt kettles (kettle operators) are exposed to a high-temperature product that may cause moderate to severe burns in the event of contact. If not properly controlled, hot asphalt may also cause damage to surrounding structures in the event of a fire or explosion.
2. Slipping or tripping hazards can cause workers to stumble or fall. If the workers are carrying buckets of hot tar, they can be splashed with the hot tar. Freshly applied hot tar is very slick then becomes sticky as it cools. Both conditions are hazardous.
3. Carrying buckets of hot tar up or down ladders is very dangerous and potentially exposes the worker and those below to tar burns, in addition to the fall hazards of unsafe ladder use.
4. Ignition sources anywhere near the kettle or hot-lugger may result in fire because the vapors created by the high temperatures in these pieces of equipment are flammable. The flash point (the point at which a material will burn with an ignition source) of asphalt is 560°F. To avoid fire or explosion the kettle temperature should always be maintained at least 25°F below the flash poi.

STATS

- The most deaths occurred in July (32.9%); the most happened in the afternoon—especially between 2-4 p.m.—and by trade, roofing contractors accounted for the highest number of these fatalities, West said.

- Roofers and helpers are seven times more likely to die from heat-related illness, West added.