Roofing Safety (Multiple-Unit Roof Coverings) Fatality File

Roofer’s family member helping at worksite dies after falling through skylight.

A 19-year-old family member of a self-employed roofing contractor died when he fell through a skylight to a concrete floor 35 feet below. The victim was assisting the roofer repair water leaks on the flat roof of a commercial warehouse. The incident occurred at the completion of the two-day project. The victim was walking backwards to roll up a torch hose when he apparently tripped or stepped into the skylight. The acrylic plastic domed skylight shattered under his weight and the victim fell approximately 35 feet to the concrete floor. The victim’s father immediately called for assistance and notified emergency services. The victim was transported to a local emergency room where he died a short time later.

Contact was made with both the building owner and the roofing contractor. The roofing contractor was interviewed by phone. The building owner declined an onsite investigation of the incident scene. The investigator visited the street location without accessing the building or the roof (incident location). This report is based on the interview with the employer and the onsite walk around of the building.

Based on the findings of the investigation, to prevent similar occurrences, employers should:

- Identify and guard known and potential safety hazards to all workers or visitors who access the work site.
- Ensure that buildings with plastic (acrylic) domed skylights are retrofitted with fall prevention (i.e., steel grills) to ensure that the possibility of catastrophic falls is reduced

or in the alternative use warning systems to alert workers of an immediate hazard to their life/safety.

- Employers should implement site-specific safety programs to address and reduce work related risks through the integration of safe work practices into routine work activities.