



KCA TOOL BOX TALK: Rooftop Snow Removal Hazards

Snow removal is performed for a number of reasons, such as to prevent overloading and collapse, or for construction or repair of decking or roofs. Often workers climb directly onto the roofs or structures and use equipment such as shovels, snow rakes, snow blowers, ladders, etc. Other times these operations may be performed from the ground level using snow rakes. Aerial lifts are sometimes used to access roofs and apply de-icing materials. Snow removal operations are often performed under extreme weather conditions (cold, high winds, and icy surfaces).

On construction sites where snow must be removed in order to begin or continue construction work, workers may slip and fall off roof edges, through skylights or elevator shaft openings, and from ladders or aerial lifts. They may also be injured or killed by a roof collapse.

Other significant hazards are:

- (1) Amputations, eye injuries, and injuries associated with the use of snow-blowers and other mechanized equipment.
- (2) Roof collapses or tip-overs when using aerial lifts.
- (3) Entrapment and suffocation under falling snow drifts or snow piles.
- (4) Shock/electrocution hazards from contacting power lines or damaged extension cords.
- (5) Frostbite or hypothermia from cold and windy conditions.
- (6) Musculoskeletal injuries from overexertion.

Safety Tips:

- Use snow removal methods that do not involve workers going on roofs, when possible.
- Evaluate loads exerted on roof or structure (total weight of snow, workers and equipment used), compared to the load limit of the roofs.
- Require that workers use fall protection equipment.
- Ensure that workers use ladders and aerial lifts safely.
- Use de-icing materials and apply using ladders or lifts instead.
- Use snow rakes or drag lines from the ground when possible.
- Remove snow uniformly across the roof.
- Avoid making snow piles on the roof.
- Mark a safe work zone in the area where snow is to be removed (keep people back 10 feet from the point where snow is expected to be blown or fall).
- Clearly mark rooftop or landscaping features that can become snow covered trip hazards.
- When using lifts/snow rakes, use extendable, nonconductive poles and designate a monitor/spotter to keep other workers snow rakes and the lift basket 10 feet away from overhead power lines.
- Scoop or push small amounts of snow at a time and take smaller scoops of snow if the snow is wet and heavy.

For more information visit OSHA REGULATIONS: 29 CFR 1926

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