

# Spot The Safety Violation: Snowy Roofs Are Slippery



What critical safety equipment is this worker missing'

Under perfect weather conditions, falls from heights, such as roofs, are one of the most common safety incidents. But roofs are especially hazardous when they're covered with snow and ice.

So it's even more important in the winter for workers to use appropriate fall protection when on roof tops. However, the worker in this picture from a hazard alert from the WSCC doesn't appear to be using any fall protection at all.

In addition to falling off a snowy roof, the snow may hide any openings such as skylights in the roof. A worker without fall protection could unknowingly step through such an opening, possibly with fatal results.

*Example:* A 43-year-old worker at a manufacturing plant in Wisconsin volunteered to clear snow from a flat section of the plant's roof. He stepped on an unguarded skylight that was buried in the snow and fell to the concrete floor 14 feet below. He died of brain, neck and chest injuries.

To protect workers, don't simply ignore the snow on your workplace's roof. The additional weight of ice and snow, particularly if it's heavy and wet, can compromise the roof's structural integrity and cause it to [collapse](#).

Instead, have workers clear snow and ice from the roofs of your workplace's facilities, but ensure that they follow these tips when they do so:

- Try to clear as much of the snow as possible from the ground.
- Never spray water on the roof to try to clear the snow; it'll just freeze and make a bad situation worse. Instead, use a de-icing chemical.
- Never work on a roof in wintertime, even a flat roof, unless fall prevention (such as covers, screens, railings or guardrails) is in place or you're using adequate fall protection (such as a full-body harness, lanyard, connectors and appropriate anchorage points) and [slip-resistant footwear](#).
- Be wary of any skylights or other openings in the roof that may be hidden by the snow. And never sit on, lean

against or step on a skylight lens or any covering placed over such a hole. (Here's more information on protecting workers from [falls through openings](#).)

You should also [make sure workers shovel snow from the rest of your workplace](#), including walkways, the parking lot and the loading docks. Make sure workers use [proper snow shoveling techniques](#) so they don't get hurt or have a [heart attack](#).