

Steep-Slope Roofs: Verify Protection Before Access

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Why this matters

On a steep roof, a slip can become a slide toward an edge. Material delivery, changing work positions and the trip back to the ladder can expose workers even when the main work area is protected.

Objective: Verify the protected route, working position and fall system before stepping onto a steep roof.

Key hazards or failure points

Sliding at eaves or rakes; fragile surfaces; unprotected access; unsuitable anchorage; insufficient clearance; loose materials; delayed rescue.

Practical controls

- Confirm roof readiness, actual slope and the applicable protection before access. Use the selected compliant system; a warning line, monitor or slide guard is not a substitute for steep-roof fall protection.
- Plan protected transfers and each working position, including the last task before leaving. Use the actual system instructions and required design for attachment, compatibility and clearance. Do not assume a roof vent or seam clamp is a suitable anchor.
- Stage and secure materials within the approved loading arrangement. Keep the route clear and stop when footing or wind defeats control. Protect people below and have workable rescue arrangements before exposure.

Verify It in the Field

The lead identifies the released roof area and access route from a protected position. Compare eaves, rakes, holes and skylights with the protection plan; a completed-looking covering does not establish a safe walking surface.

Have the responsible person verify the installed fall system for today's positions and movement. Inspect personal equipment before use, and check line routing, edge contact and protected transitions without entering an unprotected area.

Review how materials reach the work without removing protection or pulling a worker out of position. Confirm rescue roles, available equipment and communication. Record roof area, acceptance source, actual findings, checker and time.

Stop and reassess

Hold access for unknown roof condition, missing protection, uncertain attachment or clearance, slippery footing, loose material or unavailable rescue. Stay protected and have the responsible person resolve the change. Recheck and rebrief before returning; do not disconnect merely to reach the next position.

Ask the crew

1. Where could a slip carry us?
2. How is each transfer protected?
3. What changes when today's material arrives?

Use the task plan and required specialist decisions before exposure.

Sources: OSHA 1926.500–503; actual roof and fall-system instructions.

Free next step: [JHA/JSA planning & field-verification worksheet](#)

Expanded guidance and separate forms: toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/steep-slope-roof-safety