

Fall Protection

In recent months there has been a heightened

awareness of the issue of falls through roof openings (being defined as skylights) driven by the recent formation of an ASTM Work Group investigating the development of a skylight fall protection test standard. The issue as it has been presented does not correlate with the experience of the

manufacturer members of the AAMA Skylight Council. To date, early output of this ASTM Work Group attributes skylight injuries to incidents involving other products and conditions such as light transmitting roof panels, uncovered openings in the roof or other circumstances

unrelated to the skylight products. The following is in response to the inaccurate presentation of this data that has reached the public domain through various industry publications.

The AAMA Skylight Council's effort to get complete and reliable facts in enough detail to properly assess the risk of skylight-related incidences remains incomplete to date. Until such data is provided in full and examined, we believe that it will be difficult to discover and focus on the true hazards, thus making it challenging to develop a reasonable approach to mitigate skylight-related accidents.

The AAMA Skylight Council accepts that the responsibility for fall protec-



tion must be shared amongst the many parties involved with the design, construction and maintenance of roofs. The following established safety procedures for minimizing risk should be implemented and followed first as a strong foundation for mitigating the occurrence of all falls from roofs and roof openings. In special circumstances the use of railings, grids, external or internal screens, or specially designed products meeting a fall protection standard have been employed.

1. Only construction and building maintenance professionals should ever be on a roof, as there are a number of potential fall hazards present, including skylights. Access to a roof is the responsibility of the building owner and should be limited to such personnel by whatever reasonable means necessary.
2. Applicable OSHA safety regulations should be complied with at all

times when it is necessary for individuals to be on a roof.

3. All individuals allowed to be on a roof as described above must be fully trained on roof safety by their employer and should have the competence and sense of personal responsibility and personal safety to follow all roof safety practices. The employer should have qualified personnel

identify all potential roof hazards and ensure that all precautionary measures and practices are implemented. This may include, but is not limited to, the use of temporary barriers, PFAS (personal fall arrest systems) and warning signs. The potential hazards and safety measures implemented specific to the site must be communicated to and understood by all personnel working on the roof.

4. Signage should be posted by the building owners and managers at each access point on to the roof communicating roof safety and inherent dangers.
5. Skylights, and the roofs they are mounted in, are designed to resist the applicable environmental load requirements such as snow loads, wind loads, dead loads, and in some cases hurricane-induced wind-borne debris impact loads. Standard design practices do not dictate that they are to be manufac-

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tured for human impact or point loads. Warning labels on skylights indicate this, as required by the building codes since 1986. In some cases signage properly placed at roof access points has been employed to communicate this as well.

The AAMA Skylight Council has worked diligently for over 30 years to establish technically solid performance standards and design guidelines in which safety has always been an important consideration. The issue of fall protection is not a new one. Manufacturer members of the AAMA Skylight Council have been proactive in improving the safety performance of their products; as manufacturers of a product that is installed on a roof by customers, roof safety issues have been a consideration for some time.

As such, the AAMA Skylight Council's mission is to look objectively at this issue and all its elements from which the data is derived. The AAMA Skylight Council will continue our commitment to roof safety as presented here and will endeavor to pursue reason-

able approaches in the future through a newly formed AAMA Fall Protection Task Group, along with continued participation in ASTM's Human Impact for Fall-Through Resistance Test Standard Development Work Group.

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