

## TOOLBOX TALK #46

### ROOFTOP HAZARDS – PART 2

*In certain regions that experience cold winters, working on rooftops can be a treacherous endeavor. Ice can make travel dangerous. Snow loads can threaten structural integrity. Shoveling can potentially increase the risk of sprains, strains and heart attacks. And still, weather-related hazards are only some of the dangers of working on a roof. These articles present several hazards that employees should be aware of when working on a rooftop.*

#### **Access**

Some work sites may have roof access via a service elevator, staircase or stair tower. However, more often roofs are accessed by some type of ladder, fixed or temporary. Falls are the main concern when working with ladders. Slipping on a staircase can still result in injury, but it rarely results in someone plummeting 10 or 20 feet. When climbing a ladder, a missed rung, sudden shift or loss of balance can result in just that. OSHA addresses this problem in their ladder standard 1926.1050.



Workers climbing ladders to access roofs should not be allowed to carry things in their hands. Ensure that tool belts are utilized or that they bring tools and materials up some other way like a tag line or hoist rope. Another good idea is to use some type of material handler such as a rough terrain forklift or a boom truck. Ensure that fixed ladders are inspected and have the necessary protections. Make sure temporary ladders are inspected, secured against movement and extend the necessary 3 feet above the level to which they will be climbed. Another way to achieve the extension is by using ladder toppers. These devices attach to the top of ladders, giving the necessary 3 feet for a hand hold, but allow workers to step through the rails rather than around while mounting and dismounting. This is important because many falls occur when workers attempt to step around rails.

#### **Working alone**

In many cases, roofs are difficult to access and are not readily visible from the ground or other parts of the property. Pedestrian traffic is non-existent, which adds up to one simple point; if something happens while working alone on a roof, it could be a long time before anyone realizes something is wrong. Rooftop work should always involve a minimum of two people and any workers on a roof should be in constant contact with someone who is not on the roof. This is important not only for summoning rescue in an emergency, but also for something as simple as getting locked out, which can be especially dangerous in extreme temperatures and weather.