



Short Duration Roof Repairs

Unsafe work at height is more likely when short duration roof repair work is carried out as this can be more difficult to manage.

The common assumption is that risk is less for tasks that will only take a minute, but of course the safety measures that a roofing contractor takes must reflect the risk of harm and not the time taken to carry out the task.

Working on roofs is specialised work and should only be done by competent people, using a method of work specific to the job, with the appropriate training, supervision and monitoring.

What is short duration work?

A short duration roof maintenance task is one which:

- Can be completed in a matter of hours
- Is infrequent
- Usually only needs one or two people
- Does not involve difficult work (*for example, heavy or awkward loads*).

Before starting work

The Working at Height Regulations sets out a simple hierarchy for managing and selecting equipment for work at height:

1. **Avoid work at height where you can.**
2. **Use work equipment or other measures to prevent falls where work at height cannot be avoided.**
3. **Where you cannot eliminate the risk of a fall, use work equipment or other measures to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall.**

Using ladders

For tasks of low risk and short duration, ladders and roof ladders can be sensible and practical option.

If your risk assessment determines it is correct to use a ladder, you must minimise the risk by making sure your workers have the relevant skills, knowledge, experience and training required to use the equipment safely and are fully aware of the risks and measures to help control them.

Avoid working at height	Drones; mapping applications; gutter cleaning vacuums with telescopic poles	
Prevent falls while working at height	COLLECTIVE PROTECTION	INDIVIDUAL PROTECTION
	Cherry picker; scissor lift; parapet wall; temporary and fixed handrails; barriers	Work restraint systems; Valley Walker–single person
Minimise the consequences of falls	Safety netting; crash deck; safe landing systems–air bags close to work area	Personal fall protection equipment; rope access; man anchors; work restraint systems

Roof strength and stability

Some non-fragile surfaces can become fragile with age and damage so need to be checked. You should always assume any roofing surface is fragile until confirmed otherwise by a competent person. Is the roof suitable to stand on? This depends on whether it is:

- Fragile
- Sloping
- Slippery

Weather conditions could also mean it is unsafe to carry out the work especially in high or gusting winds or icy roof surfaces.



Further information

For more information refer to the NFRC's [Roofing & Cladding in Windy Conditions 4th Edition](#)

Have you identified whether there are any fragile surfaces?

You need to be particularly aware of fragile materials when working at height as their presence in, or near the working area, increases the risk. A fragile surface is one, which would be liable to break if a person walked or fell onto it.

Make sure you:

- Avoid the need to work on, near or pass across them. For example, can a skylight be repaired or replaced from underneath using a tower scaffold or from above using a cherry picker.
- Prevent a fall by using marked walkways or use suitable working platforms with guard rails during work on or near a fragile surface.
- Minimise the consequences of a fall by utilizing a fall arrest system.

Accessing the roof

PEOPLE

If possible, you should use tested and certified existing fixed access rather than temporary equipment. Otherwise, as a minimum, use tower scaffolds, or similar systems rather than just a ladder as these systems also provide edge protection and a platform that you can install crawling boards from.

Secured ladders will often be the preferred method for domestic pitched roof work. For other work, they should be the last resort used, for example where there is not enough space to use anything else.

EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

Consider how to get equipment and materials onto and off the roof. Before lifting materials up the side of a tower scaffold you should assess the handling and stability risks. You should prevent the fall of tools or materials by using tool belts, lanyards and other methods.

It is always a good idea to protect others in the event that materials or equipment do fall from height. Set up exclusion zones using suitable fencing or barriers. Materials, tools or debris should never be thrown down (*bombed*) from height.

Selecting access equipment for work at height

When deciding which type of access equipment is most suitable for a particular task, consider the following:

- Slopes or poor ground conditions.
- Obstructions, for example, conservatories.
- Overhead cables.



Further guidance

General information can be found in:

- NRFC HSGS10–'Summary of the Work at Height'
- Work at Height Regulations 2005
- HSE HSG 33–'Health and safety in Roof Work'

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