

# Fire & Rescue NSW

## Operations Bulletin 2012/05

### Safe work on roofs



#### Issue

Firefighters may be required to work on roofs after storms or fires. There are a number of hazards associated with working on roofs which, if not eliminated or minimised, may result in serious injury or death of a firefighter.

This Operations Bulletin outlines safe work practices that must be applied when working on a roof.

#### Background

The [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#) and [Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011](#) require FRNSW to identify hazards in the work environment that may pose a risk to workers, and for those risks to be assessed and control measures put in place to eliminate or minimise the risk.

The [Managing the risk of falls at workplaces Code of Practice](#) further discusses the risk of falls and that workers can be injured in a fall from *any* elevated level.

#### Hazards

##### *With risk of falls*

- The roof may include fragile material (eg cement sheeting, rusty metal, slate, fibreglass sheeting, skylights) which may collapse under foot.
- The roof surface may be slippery (eg gloss tiles) or may become slippery if wet. A sloping roof may also make it difficult to maintain balance.
- The roof surface may be unstable and susceptible to collapse after fire or if damaged by tree limbs or other debris during storms.
- The roof edge is open and unprotected.
- Equipment used to access the roof – ie aerial appliances or portable ladders – puts firefighters at heights from which they may fall.

##### *With risk of electric shock*

- The consumers mains may run in or around the roof and be live until the power is isolated by the electricity company.
- There may be a solar power system installed on the roof which is generating DC electricity.

##### *Other risks*

- Roofs can be constructed using asbestos cement sheeting, which if degraded, may be friable.

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Assess the risks associated with working on the roof.

- Determine whether the work can be completed from the ground.
- Consider the use of an aerial appliance.

*If it is not possible to complete the task from the ground:*

- Identify all locations and tasks that could cause a fall or electric shock. Check for structural damage of the roof.
- Ensure power is isolated as instructed in SOG 14.2, [Isolating power at incidents](#) and SOG 14.7, [Alternative power sources](#). Where practical, isolate solar hot water or pool heating systems.
- If there is asbestos, also follow instructions in SOG 10.11, [Asbestos](#).
- **Use a roof safety system** as described in [Recommended practice: Height safety equipment](#), irrespective of the shape, size, slope, height or construction of the structure.
  - Establish the roof safety system in such a way that it protects you from a fall while working on the roof, as well as when going up or down a portable ladder, or when moving to and from the roof.
  - You must be [trained](#) to establish and use a roof safety system. If you have not been trained, do not work on the roof.
  - At fires, only use a roof safety system during overhaul. It is not suitable to use during firefighting operations due to the risk of heat degrading the ropes and harnesses.
  - Do not use a roof safety system if the structure has compromised stability, or where fire has extended into the roof void.
  - When using an aerial appliance to access the roof, use the fall arrest system fitted for cage occupants. Do not anchor a roof safety system to an aerial appliance.
- Only use FRNSW equipment – eg our portable ladders.

This Operations Bulletin rescinds Operations Bulletin 2005/2, *Safe working on roofs – storm, tempest and fire incidents*.

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Noted: Station Commander	A	B	C	D	Other
Checked: Duty Commander					

**Previous Operations Bulletin:** 2012/04 Avoiding visor damage while disinfecting SCBA facemasks