

Roof Tarping (Blue Roof) Safety

Reinforced plastic tarps, commonly called “Blue Roofs,” provide temporary protection for the roofs of homes and other buildings damaged during severe weather such as a hurricane or tornado. When employees access roofs to install these tarps, they are at risk of falls, electrocutions, and other hazards. OSHA recommends the following steps to help keep workers safe.

Identify the Hazards

ALWAYS avoid electrical hazards!

- Look for downed overhead power lines; treat all power lines as “live.”
 - **WARNING:** Generator use can cause “backfeed” — energizing lines that are no longer receiving power from the electrical grid.
- Contact the utility company to ensure lines are de-energized.
- Do not use a metal ladder near power lines or in close proximity to energized electrical equipment.

ASSESS the roof condition/stability prior to allowing employees to start work.

- Do not allow employees to work on top of a damaged roof until after the strength and structural integrity of the roof has been determined.

SELECT the fall protection system(s) employees will use while installing the tarp.

- Low-slope roofs (a roof with a slope of less than or equal to 4 inches of vertical rise for every 12 inches horizontal length) use conventional fall protection (fall arrest, guardrails, or safety nets) with or without a warning line system; a warning line system with a monitor; or a monitor alone on small roofs (50 ft. or less in width).
- Steep roofs (greater than 4 in 12 vertical to horizontal) do not stand on a steep roof without using conventional fall protection systems.

***Note:** Using a rope grab as part of a fall protection system is one example, among others, of equipment that can be used to reduce the risk of falling. All components of the system, including the harness, rope and rope grab, any connectors, and the anchor point must meet applicable OSHA requirements.*



Photo: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Installing the Tarp

- Never install a tarp during a storm while it is windy or raining.
- Use proper protective equipment such as hard hats and eye protection and/or other control measures such as chutes and barricaded areas when removing roof debris. This ensures employees on the ground are not exposed to hazards from falling objects.
- Remove roof debris using a roof rake or brush from ground level. If using a ladder, ensure the use of proper safety techniques to prevent falls.
- Whenever possible, avoid getting on the roof when tasks can be done from ladders or other stable platforms.
- When accessing the roof, lean the ladder at a safe angle that is at a 4:1 ratio (one foot away from the building at the bottom for each four feet of ladder length to the roof eave), and make sure the ladder extends three feet above the roof edge.
- Watch for tripping hazards including vent stacks, satellite dishes, lightning arresting components and cables, and cleats holding down the tarp.

- Do not walk on a tarp. A tarped roof will be very slippery, especially when wet.
- Watch your step — skylights and other openings that have been tarped over will not be obvious to someone walking on the roof.

Workers' Rights

Workers have the right to:

- Working conditions that do not pose a risk of serious harm.
- Receive information and training (in a language and vocabulary the worker understands) about workplace hazards, methods to prevent them, and the OSHA standards that apply to their workplace.
- Review records of work-related injuries and illnesses.
- File a complaint asking OSHA to inspect their workplace if they believe there is a serious hazard or that their employer is not following OSHA's rules. OSHA will keep all identities confidential.

- Exercise their rights under the law without retaliation, including reporting an injury or raising health and safety concerns with their employer or OSHA. If a worker has been retaliated against for using their rights, they must file a complaint with OSHA as soon as possible, but no later than 30 days.

For additional information, see [OSHA's Workers page](#).

How to Contact OSHA

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA's role is to ensure these conditions for America's working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education and assistance. For more information, visit www.osha.gov or call OSHA at 1-800-321-OSHA (6742), TTY 1-877-889-5627.

This is one in a series of informational fact sheets highlighting OSHA programs, policies or standards. It does not impose any new compliance requirements. For a comprehensive list of compliance requirements of OSHA standards or regulations, refer to Title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations. This information will be made available to sensory-impaired individuals upon request. The voice phone is (202) 693-1999; teletypewriter (TTY) number: (877) 889-5627.



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