

**Annex D to Method Statement 3
Work on Fragile Roofs: Protection Against Falls**

Introduction:

This Safe Working Procedure outlines the precautions needed to prevent falls through fragile roofs.

Every year many workers die after falling through fragile roofs. Countless more are injured. Some are lucky and walk away, bruised and shaken.

OTHERS NEVER WALK AGAIN!

Fragile roofs are treacherous. They often look secure. They may even allow one or two people to walk over them without mishap but when they give way, nothing can save you.

THERE IS NO WARNING, THE ONLY THING THAT'S LEFT TO CHANCE IS HOW BADLY YOU'LL BE INJURED!

Identification:

Fragile materials are often found on roofs whether as part of the structure (as in the case of rooflights) or over the complete surface.

Many materials used for roofing purposes including certain plastic sheeting, wired glass, woodwool slabs, asbestos/fibre cement and rusted corrugated steel sheeting are liable to fracture under a person's weight and should be regarded as fragile.

People often wrongly believe that it is safe to walk along the line of purlin bolts securing asbestos/fibre cement roof sheets.

THE PRACTICE OF WALKING ON PURLIN BOLTS CAN BE LETHAL AND RESULTS IN MANY DEATHS AND SERIOUS INJURIES EVERY YEAR!

Precautions:

These are some of the precautions which need to be considered before working on or near fragile roof materials;

BEFORE WORK BEGINS POSITIVELY IDENTIFY ANY FRAGILE AREAS OF THE ROOF AND GET TO KNOW THE ROOF STRUCTURE

- 2 DO NOT TAKE THE ABSENCE OF FRAGILE ROOF WARNING SIGNS TO MEAN THE ROOF IS SOUND - FOLLOW STEP 1.**
- 3 IF THE FRAGILE MATERIAL APPEARS IN THE FORM OF A ROOF-LIGHT AND IT IS NECESSARY TO WORK APPROACH WITHIN 2 METRES - USE A PHYSICAL BARRIER OR SUBSTANTIAL COVER AND MARK - DANGER DO NOT REMOVE!**

- 4 IF THE WHOLE ROOF IS FRAGILE AND ACCESS IS REQUIRED PRECAUTIONS MUST BE TAKEN TO PREVENT ANYONE STEPPING ONTO THE FRAGILE SURFACE. DO THIS BY USING AT LEAST 2 CRAWLING LADDERS/BOARDS TO SPAN THE PURLINS.
- SINGLE SCAFFOLD BOARDS ARE NOT TO BE USED!
- 5 CRAWLING BOARDS MUST BE AT LEAST 430mm WIDE, AND WHERE POSSIBLE SECURED TO PREVENT MOVEMENT.
- 6 IF IT IS NECESSARY TO WORK IN A VALLEY GUTTER OR USE THE GUTTER AS A MEANS OF ACCESS TO THE WORK AREA, AND THE MATERIALS NEXT TO THE VALLEY ARE FRAGILE, PROTECTION AGAINST FALLING MUST BE PROVIDED.
- RUNNING LINES TO WHICH SAFETY HARNESSSES CAN BE ATTACHED IS ONE SUITABLE METHOD; LAYING SCAFFOLD BOARDS OR SIMILAR TO A HEIGHT OF 1 METRE AGAINST THE FRAGILE MATERIAL IS ANOTHER.

Open Edges:

Additionally on flat roofs if people have to approach an open roof edge;

GUARD RAILS AND TOE-BOARDS MUST BE PROVIDED!

Protection of Others!

While protection of operatives is important;

IT IS EQUALLY ESSENTIAL THAT SUITABLE PRECAUTIONS ARE TAKEN TO PROTECT OTHERS, INCLUDING MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC, WHO MAY BE CLOSE TO THE WORK SITE!

Loose materials and tools should be kept away from the edges, the toe-boards positioned to prevent materials from falling.

NEVER THROW MATERIALS FROM A ROOF; THEY SHOULD BE LOWERED TO THE GROUND OR DISPOSED OF USING ENCLOSED RUBBISH CHUTES!