

# FATALITY NARRATIVE

## Framer Falls 18 Feet while Sheathing Roof

**Industry:** Residential Remodelers

**Task:** Installing roof sheathing

**Occupation:** Framer

**Type of Incident:** Fall

**Incident Date:** February 29, 2016

**Release Date:** September 07, 2017

**SHARP Report No.:** 71-162-2017

In February of 2016, a 53-year-old framer died when he fell 18 feet from the residential roof he was sheathing. He had worked for his employer, a construction company specializing in home remodeling, on several projects and had been on this project for nearly a month. He was a licensed contractor with 30 years' experience. On the day of the incident, the victim and another worker began work at 7 a.m. They were working on a new two-story single-family residence project. The victim's job was to finish sheathing the roof. Before they started work, the employer told the victim to put on a safety harness and use fall protection while working on the roof. The employer told investigators the victim refused to wear fall protection, because he said the rope (lifeline) got in his way and that he would trip over it while moving about the roof. He also considered the victim to be a subcontractor, so he did not believe that he had the authority to compel him to use fall protection. The victim used a ladder to access the 12/12 pitch roof and began installing sheathing. The other worker went to work in the building's basement and the employer left the site to get



**The 12/12 pitch residential roof where a framer was installing sheathing when he fell 18 feet, landing on concrete. He was not using fall protection.**

building materials. A light rain began to fall. A few minutes later, the worker in the basement heard the victim sliding down the roof, then saw him fall head first onto the concrete walkway 18 feet below. He called 911 and then began CPR on the unconscious victim. Emergency responders arrived on the scene and attempted to revive the victim, but were unsuccessful. Washington State Department of Labor and Industries' Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) investigators determined that in this instance, the victim was an employee, not a subcontractor.

[For a slideshow version, click here.](#)

### Requirements

- General contractors have a responsibility to ensure the safety of their worksite, not only for their own employees, but also for subcontractors and their employees. See [WRD 27.00](#)
- Employers must ensure that employees exposed to fall hazards of four feet or more while working on a roof with a pitch greater than 4 in 12 use a fall restraint system, fall arrest system, or positioning devices. See [WAC 296-155-24609\(7\)\(a\)](#)
- Employers must develop and implement a written fall protection work plan including each area of the workplace where employees are assigned and where fall hazards of 10 feet or more exist. See [WAC 296-155-24611\(2\)\(a\)](#)

### Recommendations

General contractors should:

- Convey firm expectations for using fall protection to employees and subcontractors before the job starts
- Prioritize safe work practices over production speed
- Have a policy to send home or terminate anyone not using fall protection. It should apply to employees and subcontractors
- Visit sites to monitor for compliance and take corrective action

### Resources

Independent Contractor Guide: A Step-by-Step Guide to Hiring Independent Contractors in Washington State  
[www.lni.wa.gov/IPUB/101-063-000.pdf](http://www.lni.wa.gov/IPUB/101-063-000.pdf)

This narrative was developed to alert employers and employees of a tragic loss of life of a worker in Washington State and is based on preliminary data ONLY and does not represent final determinations regarding the nature of the incident or conclusions regarding the cause of the fatality.

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