



Rope Access for Roof Work

INTRODUCTION

Roof work is a high-risk activity which accounts for a quarter of all fatalities in the construction industry. The Work at Height Regulations 2005 set out a hierarchy of control which must be followed systematically.

Before working at height you must work through these simple steps:

- Avoid work at height where it is reasonably practicable to do so;
- Where work at height cannot be avoided, prevent falls using either an existing place of work that is already safe or the right type of equipment;
- Minimise the distance and consequences of a fall, by using the right type of equipment where the risk cannot be eliminated.

As the client, you will be responsible for checking that any contractor you appoint to access and carry out roof work is competent to do the work safely. You will need to make thorough checks to ensure that the contractor has the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to work safely at height.

Rope Access

Rope access is a method of working at height that can be effective in gaining access to and allowing the worker to be supported at a place of work; and as a means of egress. However, rope access must not be viewed as the default access system requirement when planning roof work and each of the duty holders should be able to justify with confidence why they have selected rope access over other forms of access methods that provide collective measures and protect everyone working at height.

The application of rope access methods is regarded as a complete system, in which planning, competence and suitable equipment are equally important. It is therefore essential that a rope access company has the skills, knowledge, experience and organisational capability to carry out their work in a way that considers and mitigates risk to health and safety.

Selecting Contractors for Rope Access

Any roofing contractor looking to utilise rope access as part of their Safe System of Work (SSoW) when carrying out roof repairs, must be able to prove that they have the skills, knowledge, experience and qualifications to assess and manage the different levels of complexity and risk associated with accessing and working from ropes. The level of complexity and degree of risk influences the:

- Planning, management and supervisory skills required.
- Skill levels and experience required by the rope access technicians.
- Choice of access method and equipment to be used.

A competent company should be able to provide evidence of this, along with proof of qualifications to ensure they maintain a high standard of rope access activities in terms of safety and work quality.

The Industrial Rope Access Trade Association (IRATA) ensures a safe system of work and encourages career progression for rope access technicians. Each technician is required to re-certify every three years to demonstrate they maintain the necessary abilities to work safely. Technicians may also progress through three levels as time, experience, and training allow; each demanding a greater knowledge of the rope access skills necessary at the worksite. IRATA certified qualifications are recognised globally, which therefore should be deemed as baseline competence for anyone selecting rope access for roof works.



Further information

For more information on your responsibilities as a commercial client, visit the HSE website:
www.hse.gov.uk/construction/areyou/commercial-client.htm

For more information on the benefits of selecting a qualified rope access technician, visit the IRATA website:
www.irata.org/

For more information on the benefits of selecting an NFRC member to carry out your roof works, visit the NFRC website:
www.nfrc.co.uk/why-you-should-choose-an-nfrc-contractor

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020 7638 7663

info@nfrco.co.uk

www.nfrco.co.uk

@TheNFRC

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