



## Don't Fall for Fragile—Step Back and Plan

### Why this campaign matters

Falls through fragile roofs and roof elements remain a leading cause of fatal and life-changing injuries in construction. Many incidents happen when workers trust surfaces that cannot support them or take shortcuts to *"just get it done."*

#### Don't Fall for Fragile—Step Back and Plan

Take a moment to assess the task, choose the safest method, and never assume the roof is safe.

### What is a Fragile Roof?

A fragile roof is any roof surface, roof assembly or roof element liable to fail under foot traffic, imposed load or impact, causing a fall. Fragility may arise from the original construction, deterioration, corrosion, damage, poor support, or hidden weakness. **Common examples include:**

- Rooflights, domes and skylights
- Fibre cement and asbestos cement sheets
- Corroded or thin metal sheets
- Old liner panels
- Timber or wood wool slab decks in poor condition
- Damaged or aged roof coverings
- Hidden weak areas beneath coatings, overlays or debris
- Any roof surface not confirmed safe by a competent person

#### If in doubt, treat it as fragile

### Step Back and Plan Before Starting

#### Ask yourself:

- Has the roof been inspected by a competent person?
- Have any identified fragile areas been demarcated or safety measures installed?
- Can the work be done without accessing the roof?
- Are collective fall protection measures in place?
- Are access routes safe?
- Is there a rescue plan for falls or suspension?

If not, stop and fix it first.



### Safe Access—Collective Protection First

Where roof access is unavoidable, priority should be given to controls that protect everyone. **Examples include:**

- Safety netting beneath the work area
- Fully-boarded working platforms
- Independent stagings spanning supports
- Guardrails and edge protection
- Covered or guarded rooflights
- Scaffold access and safe stepping-off points
- Valley-walk protection systems

Collective protection should be considered before personal fall protection.

### Additional Access Equipment and Personal Protection

Where further controls are needed, use equipment suitable for the task and roof design:

- Crawling boards
- Roof ladders
- Access boards
- Designated safe walking routes across supported areas
- Fall restraint lanyards to prevent reaching a fall hazard
- Harness systems attached to suitable tested anchor points
- Fall arrest systems only where properly planned, supervised and with rescue arrangements in place

Harnesses and lanyards are not a simple solution. Incorrect anchor points, poor fitting or misuse, swing falls, and suspension trauma may introduce additional risks.

#### Never stand directly on fragile sheets or rooflights

### Rooflights Catch People Out

Treat every rooflight as fragile, regardless of appearance.

- Cover or guard them properly
- Ensure covers are secure and visible
- Never stand, kneel or place loads on them

## During the Works

### Keep checking:

- Has anything moved or become unstable?
- Has the weather changed?
- Are lanyards snagging or creating trip hazards?
- Are workers staying within safe zones?
- Is everyone following the agreed system of work?

If conditions change—**Step Back and Plan** again.

## Emergency Arrangements

### Before work starts:

- Rescue plan ready
- Rescue equipment available
- Team briefed
- Suspension trauma considered
- Emergency access clear

Do not rely solely on calling emergency services.

## Final Message

One wrong step can be fatal. Fragile roofs fail without warning. Stop unsafe shortcuts before they cost a life.

**Don't Fall for Fragile—Step Back and Plan**

**DON'T FALL FOR FRAGILE**

**STEP BACK & PLAN**

**The Dangers** ❌

Fragile roofs might include:

- Rooflights
- Asbestos sheets
- Corroded metal
- Old fibre cement

Fragile surfaces can fail without warning

One step can be fatal

**Safety Practices** ✅

- Assess the roof before work begins
- Use platforms, guardrails or crawling boards
- Consider hierarchy of fall protection
- Take site-specific precautions
- Prevent falls with safety measures

TAKE STEP-SPECIFIC PRECAUTIONS

SCAN QR CODE TO FIND OUT MORE

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