



Internal fall protection requirements for pitched roofs on new build homes

Falls from height remain one of the biggest causes of accidents and fatalities in construction, therefore it is important that the hierarchy of fall protection set out in the Work at Height Regulations 2005 is followed at all times.

Home builders constructing new homes should install internal fall protection to protect the workers installing roof coverings from injuring themselves while working above open roof trusses. Types of internal fall protection include proprietary decking systems or air bags/bean bags as soft-landing systems.

Following an investigation with our members, it was noted that some UK House Builders allow internal fall arrest systems to be removed once the roof is felted and battened; unfortunately though this only addresses one aspect of the risk involved.

Although operatives are instructed and trained to only walk where the tile battens are attached to the trusses, it is possible for the operative to lose their balance and place their foot mid-span of the truss to prevent them from falling over. This risk increases further when the roof is being loaded out with roof tiles, because the operative is stood in the upright position along the truss line, while walking up the roof carrying the roof coverings.

In the event that a roof batten broke under the weight of an operative, there is only the strength of the underfelt membrane to prevent the operative falling through into the roof void, and as such the potential risk of injury remains high.

The NFRC therefore recommends that the internal fall protection is not removed by the home builder or main contractor until it is safe to do so; ideally when the roofing works have been completed, but as a minimum when the roof has been felted, battened and completely loaded out.

At no point would we advocate that the internal fall protection be removed before this point, unless the risk assessment deems that it is safe to do so.

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