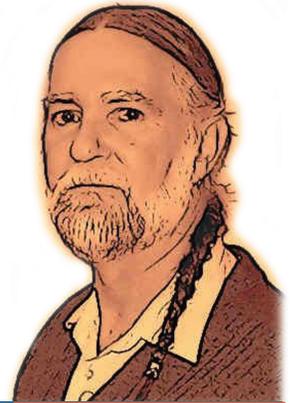


# Dave Dahr on Safety

**SAFETY  
TIP  
No.3**



## Working Safely on Your Roof

**HELPING  
HOMEOWNERS**

SO YOU NEED TO HAVE THE roof of your home repaired or replaced?

Repairing or replacing a roof on your home is a big and important project and one that involves significant safety hazards. Whether you decide to do the work yourself or hire a contractor, insuring that the work is done safely requires your attention. Do not assume that an experienced roofing company, if you hire one, will ensure the safety of those who work on your property if it is not outlined in your contract.

### Hazards

The main hazards associated with roofing are falling off the roof or into the roof where leaks have rotted the wood under the shingles. Another area of concern is the grit on the shingles and protecting those who are in the immediate area or working on the ground from both the grit and flying shingles.

### Falling

You need to know what types of risks you are going to put yourself into and your responsibility for those who are going to help you. Work conducted on the roof involves working at a height greater than ten feet where a fall will almost certainly result in a serious injury or fatality. This also applies to getting on and off the roof when a ladder is not used properly.

### Ladders

In working from a ladder or using it to access your roof, you need to remember the following:

- The base of the ladder is secure.
- The ladder is one foot away from the wall for every four feet of rise.
- The ladder is in good condition. (See *Safety Tip No. 2: Using Ladders*)

Working on the roof safely requires a number of safety strategies in addition to equipment and controls.



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## Pitched Roof

The average roof is under a six-twelve pitch, which is also termed a “walk on” roof. The term “pitch” means that for every twelve inches of horizontal length (run), the roof will rise four inches, e.g. a four-twelve pitched roof will rise four inches for every twelve inches of length. This is how the degree of the slope is determined on your roof. A roof that has a pitch of six-twelve or less is required by law to have what are known as “roof jacks” at the edge of the roof, which provides the worker with a level and safe surface to work off of. Nailing a 2 x 4 on your roof is not considered a safe ledge and roof jacks should not be used as anchor points for fall arrest controls.

When working on a roof over a six- twelve pitch, more controls and precautions are required by law. They are additional roof jacks as you proceed up the roof as well as a fall arrest system (harness), railings or a full deck platform, which would be put in place by staging (scaffolding).

## Working at Gable Ends

The gable end is the part of your roof that increases in height as you proceed up the roof. When work is done at the gable end of the roof, low body positioning is a must. Keeping the body low reduces the possibility of a fall. In addition to this, keeping 75% of the body three feet from the edge of the roof will also reduce the possibility of a fall. When this cannot be achieved, the fall arrest system is required.

## Flat Roof

When working on a flat roof there are two areas of concern. One is the perimeter of the roof. The perimeter can be made secure by two methods. One is a railing which, by law, consists of three rails – a lower rail, a middle rail and a top rail. The other method is a full deck platform which would be put in place by staging (scaffolding).

The second area of concern is falling through the roof. This can be avoided by identifying any rotten areas on the surface of the roof and covering these areas with what is termed temporary flooring until the repairs are made. Any new holes made in the roof, i.e. skylights, should also be covered with the temporary flooring when no one is working on the opening. If temporary flooring cannot be done, then a railing is required.

## Disposal of Old Shingles

When removing the old shingles from the roof there should be only one location on the ground designated as a hazard area and should be identified as such to everyone at the worksite to reduce injuries to those working on the ground.

When removing the shingles you also have to be aware of the wind. A shingle caught in the wind can cause a serious injury. The grit on the shingle can also cause serious injury to the eyes. In addition to identifying the hazard area, everyone on the ground should wear personal protection equipment, i.e. hard hat, safety boots and safety glasses. Those who are handling the shingles should also wear gloves. The grit on the shingles acts like sandpaper and will wear off the skin on your hands and fingers.

As a homeowner doing your own work, perhaps with the help of friends, you take on the role of an employer, which adds to your safety duties and responsibilities. (See *Safety Tip No 1: Hiring a Contractor.*)

Workplace injuries do not discriminate between the professional and the handyperson. Take action: this is achieved by stepping back five feet and taking five minutes to identify the hazards.



**No one ever plans on being injured, but you can plan on how not to have an accident. Identify the hazard and take control.**