

# Why Rooftop Safety Is Everyone's Responsibility

By Brad Richardson

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***“But I thought safety was just the roofing contractor’s problem.”***

## The building owner’s responsibility.

When an accident happens at your facility, safety is everyone’s problem. Newspaper reporters and customers tend to notice first where an accident happens and not who was responsible. Can your company afford that kind of bad publicity?

Companies face direct costs and indirect costs whenever there is an accident on their property. While direct costs such as workers compensation, OSHA fines and increased insurance premiums can be substantial, the indirect costs can be up to 10 times higher. Indirect costs include items such as loss of client confidence, tarnished corporate image, property damage, production delays, and time lost dealing with the accident.

### Direct costs of accidents.

- Damage to property
- Medical costs to injured employees
- Third party liability
- Legal fees
- Workers compensation
- Insurance rates going up

### Indirect costs of accidents.

- Property damage
- Tool or equipment damage
- Production delays
- Investigation time
- Report writing/communication after an accident
- Hiring replacement workers
- Training (re-training)
- Loss of reputation or image
- Environmental costs (in certain instances)

Benefits of safety programs.

In just five years, a company's investment can return between five to ten times by avoiding direct and indirect costs of accidents.



Responsible roofing inside and out

***“All roofing contractors say they have a safety program. Is that good enough?”***

## **The roofing contractor's responsibility.**

### **How to tell if a contractor is serious about safety.**

- Do they have a safety committee and do employees at all levels participate in the development and implementation of their safety programs?
- Does the contractor have a dedicated safety director that makes sure procedures are followed and projects are completed safely?
- Are all roofing crews tested for illegal substances prior to being hired?
- Does the contractor have a competent person in fall protection for each job site and a qualified person capable of horizontal lifeline design installation and supervision?
- Does the contractor complete a fall protection plan that clearly establishes and defines safety setup before the project begins?
- Do they perform a site specific job hazard analysis that identifies existing/potential hazards and outlines countermeasures?
- Can they show you their safety loss control manual?
- Do crews receive ongoing training to keep safety top-of mind?

### **Culture of safety.**

Safety should be everyone's job at a roofing contractor. It should be part of their culture that is practiced every day by every employee from the crew to top management. They should plan for the potential of falls and employ safety measures to prevent them. This not only protects the contractor's employees – it also protects your property, your employees, your customers and your business.

### **Management's safety commitment.**

How much does a roofing contractor spend on safety equipment and programs every year? How much do they emphasize training? What actions do they take when an employee violates safety procedures? Do they have a zero tolerance safety policy enforced by termination? These are a few ways to gauge management's commitment to safety and their willingness to enforce their policies.

### **Training.**

Each employee that works on your roof should have training in the necessary topics which are directly related to safe roofing practices. For example: Since English is a second language for many roofing workers, your contractor should also offer training in Spanish.

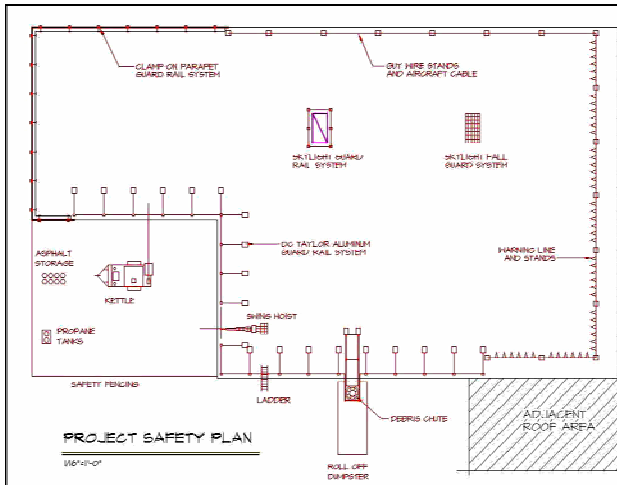
#### **Minimum training.**

- New Employee Orientation
- Fire Prevention and Protection
- Safety & Loss Control Manual
- Fall Protection
- On the Job Training – Continuous
- HAZCOM
- Ladder Safety
- OSHA 10-Hour
- Deck Replacement



## Risk analysis process.

Before a roofing job starts at your facility, your roofing contractor should complete a job hazard analysis and present you with a project safety plan. This is an important step that should not be overlooked.



### A job hazard analysis should look at:

- Work to be performed
- Hazards associated with tasks
- Countermeasures to avoid hazards

A thorough safety plan addresses employee exposures, property concerns, and assists in communication between building owners and subcontractors.

### Areas of particular interest include:

- Roof Access
- Loading Materials
- Edge Work/Deck Replacement
- Material Handling
- Debris Removal
- Working With Electricity and Chemicals
- Working With Flammables

**About the author:** Brad Richardson, Corporate Director of Environmental Health and Safety, develops and directs safety and loss control programs for all D. C. Taylor Co. service areas. It is his responsibility to provide safety training to employees and to give clients peace of mind that every effort is being made to provide a safe work area. Brad is a member of ASSE (American Society of Safety Engineers) and is authorized to train the OSHA 10 and 30 hr., Asbestos Compliance, RTFL, CERTA, and is a qualified person in fall protection design.

If you'd like to know more about D. C. Taylor Co. safety programs, contact Brad Richardson at 800-876-6346 or e-mail: [brad.richardson@dctaylorco.com](mailto:brad.richardson@dctaylorco.com)

## Proactive vs. reactive.

If your roofing contractor is not talking to you about safety before the job starts, you should ask yourself, "why not?" Talking about safety procedures after an accident is "a day late and a dollar short." Not taking a proactive approach to roof safety can cost your company considerable time and money.

## Evaluating a contractor's safety record.

Besides the ongoing safety programs initiated by a roofing contractor, there are several statistics that can give you an indication of the contractor's safety record. Ask your contractor for their updated statistics or check with OSHA for past citations.

- EMR – Experience modification ratio
- TIR – Total incident rate
- LWDIR – Loss work-day incident rate
- Past OSHA citations



**About D. C. Taylor Co.:**

With more than 50 years of commercial and industrial roofing experience, D. C. Taylor Co. provides responsible roofing, inside and out, by delivering expert roofing and OmegaSTARR<sup>SM</sup> roof retention services needed to keep its clients' facilities protected and secure. D. C. Taylor Co. has more than 60 service and roofing crews and five service areas: Atlanta, Georgia; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Chicago, Illinois; Concord, California; and Phoenix, Arizona. The company has been ranked among the nation's largest industrial roofing contractors for over 20 years.

**Summary.**

When you are considering hiring a roofing contractor, be sure to look at these six factors:

- 1** Culture – Does the contractor just talk about safety, or do they incorporate safety into every part of their work process?
- 2** Management Commitment – Does your roofing contractor financially support their safety programs and enforce their safety policies?
- 3** Training – Are ongoing training programs provided to the contractor's employees?
- 4** Risk Analysis Process – Are these three steps completed before work begins? 1. Analyze the task or work to be performed. 2. Identify hazards associated with the task. 3. Develop countermeasures to prevent or reduce the risk of the hazards.
- 5** Proactive versus Reactive – Does your contractor identify hazards or exposures before they happen? Or do they react only after a problem has occurred?
- 6** Safety Record – What is the contractor's record when it comes to safety?



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