

ROOF SAFETY IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY



Collective fall protection of guardrail and walkway with accompanying cable system providing access to restricted areas. Courtesy of Latchways

The importance of safe working on roofs has come to the fore once again in light of the recent news that the numbers of front line health and safety inspectors have been cut by 25 per cent in the last six years, according to figures obtained by the Unite union.

In 2010, there were 1,311 front line inspectors but by the end of 2016 this had fallen to just 980, according to a Freedom of Information (FOI) request. The same FOI request revealed that it takes three years four months on average, for any sentence to be handed down after a workplace fatality.

The HSE will also see its funding cut by 46 per cent of what it was in 2010 and a series of safety laws have also been scrapped.

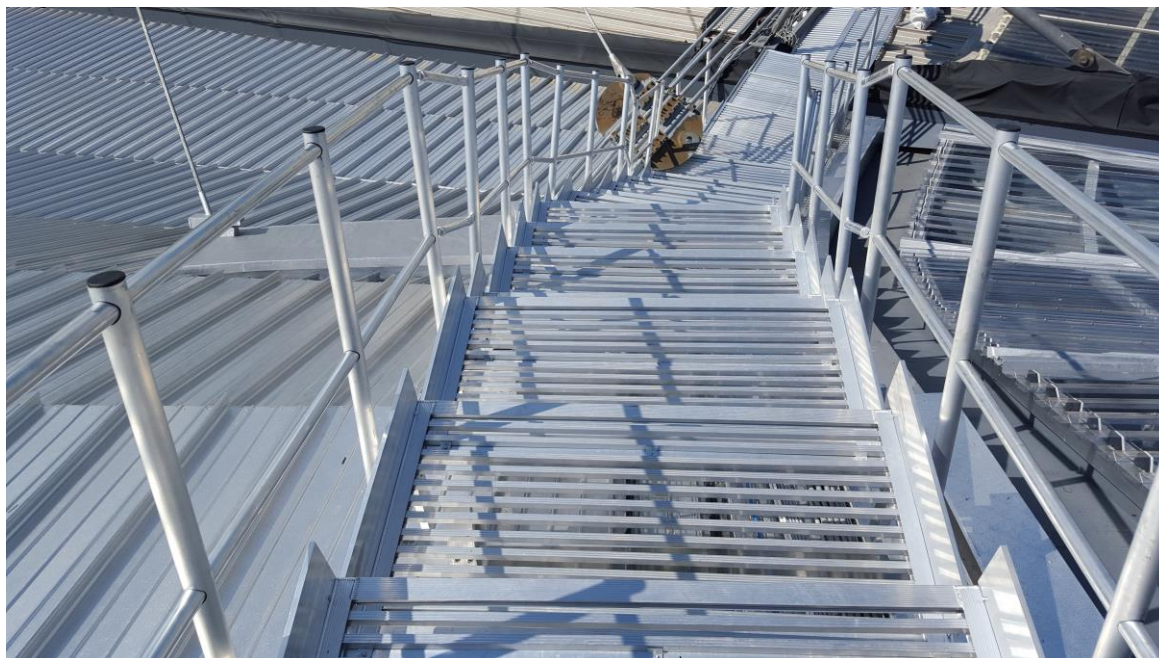
With the reduction in front line inspectors, it is imperative therefore that appropriate training and robust roof safety procedures must be of primary concern for all who are involved in roof work, particularly when working at heights and it is essential that all involved in the roofing industry understand the specific requirements for roof access and maintenance.

The Metal Cladding and Roofing Manufacturers Association (MCRMA) works to ensure that all those involved in roof construction have access to the most up to date advice on safe working practices and also the legal requirements.

Roof construction can be one of the most hazardous operations because of the potential for falls or materials dropping onto people below and proper precautions are needed to manage the risks. Due consideration for roof safety is paramount not only at the design, specification and installation stages of any construction project but also throughout the normal life of the building.

Work on a roof during the construction and installation phase and the subsequent operational phase must be undertaken with extreme caution by experienced and competent people. Contractors and those planning to work on the roof must meticulously plan and document a safe system of work, including a specific risk assessment and method statement before starting construction, installation, inspections or maintenance.

Modern metal-based industrial and commercial roofing systems incorporating rooflights and components which have been tested, assessed and rated for non-fragility and installed in accordance with manufacturer's installation instructions can provide a sound platform for work. However, the use of safety netting, edge protection and safety line systems with attached safety harnesses should always form part of the safe system of work.



A typical walkway system. Courtesy of M R Site Services

In addition to guidance provided by MCRMA members, it is incumbent on all those who need to work at heights to accept a degree of responsibility for their own safety. The contracting company, individual workers and the building owner or occupier all have a part to play to ensure that the work is conducted in a safe manner.

In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act and the Construction (Design and Management) or CDM Regulations, buildings must be designed with safety in mind, not only for the construction period itself but also throughout the normal life of the building. This will include considering the on-going and future safety of people involved in maintenance, installation of PVs, forming of penetrations, inspections, repair and even demolition. For example, it might mean as part of the design process providing permanent access to the roof via a fixed ladder and hatch, or walkways and parapets.

This requirement links to the 2005 Work at Height Regulations (WAHR) which applies to all work at height where there is any risk of a fall liable to cause injury. It places duties on employers, the self-employed and any person who controls the work of others, such as facilities managers or building owners.

MCRMA member companies can advise on the suitability and performance of materials, systems and assemblies which may be used within a tested roof assembly which has a non-fragility rating. In addition, the MCRMA Safety Lines Group (www.mcrma.co.uk/safety-lines-group) was formed to address industry concerns that the specific requirements for safe work at height; that is, access, inspection and maintenance, is still not fully understood in certain sectors of the market place.

Safety is the responsibility of all who work on site with the focus on preventing accidents in the first place. To provide additional support for those who are directly involved with aspects of roof safety, MCRMA has published guidance documents covering non-fragility of roofs; working at heights and fall protection anchorage standards.

In addition, MCRMA works closely with the Advisory Committee for Roofsafety (ACR) to ensure that all those involved in roof construction have access to the most up to date advice on safe working practices and also the legal requirements. Published guidance from the ACR is wide reaching and the material standards, good practice guides and information sheets can all be easily accessed directly or via the MCRMA roof safety page. All publications can be downloaded from the MCRMA web site at www.mcrma.co.uk.

This article first appeared in RCi magazine, June 2017

DISCLAIMER

Whilst the information contained in this publication is believed to be correct at the time of publication, the Metal Cladding and Roofing Manufacturers Association Limited and its member companies cannot be held responsible for any errors or inaccuracies and, in particular, the specification for any application must be checked with the individual manufacturer concerned for a given installation.

Information provided by the MCRMA or contained within publications and articles which are made available in any form (mechanical, electronic, photocopying or otherwise) cannot be used or cited as a means of ensuring that a material, product, system or assembly is compliant with Building Regulations.

©2017 MCRMA - 106 Ruskin Avenue, Rogerstone, Newport, South Wales NP10 0BD
01633 895633 info@mcrma.co.uk www.mcrma.co.uk