

NON-FRAGILITY ROOF GUIDANCE MEANS NO SAFETY COMPROMISE

Working at heights is rarely out of the news and it is therefore essential that all involved in the roofing industry understand the specific requirements for roof access and maintenance. In its guidance document *Non-fragility of roofs: a checklist*, the Metal Cladding and Roofing Manufacturers Association (MCRMA) gives detailed advice for anyone who has to access a roof whilst ensuring that there is no compromise on safety.

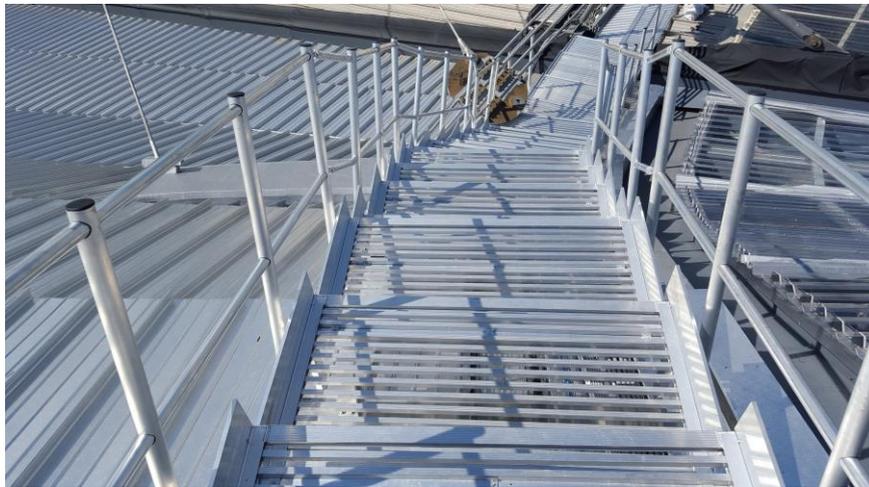


Latchways Constant Force fall protection and WalkSafe system on Kalzip standing seam roof. Image courtesy of Latchways plc

As in all building work, good safety standards are essential to prevent accidents. 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 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.



A typical walkway system. Image courtesy of M R Site Services Limited

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.

MCRMA and its members work closely with the Advisory Committee for Roofsafety (ACR) to ensure that all those involved in roof work construction have access to the most up to date advice on safe working practices and also the legal requirements.

Modern metal-based industrial and commercial roofing systems incorporating rooflights and components which have been tested and assessed for non-fragility and installed in accordance with manufacturer's installation instructions can provide a suitable 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.



Roofsafe rail installation on a trapezoidal roof. Image courtesy of Capital Safety

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.

The following checklist must be considered before accessing any roof:

- The roof should be declared **FRAGILE** unless there is documentation to confirm its current non-fragility.
- Could the building's external or internal environment have an adverse influence on the durability of the materials, systems or assemblies used in the construction?
- Before accessing the roof, the condition of the roof should be assessed from the inside of the building for the following:
 - Are any of the fasteners missing or not attached to the purlins? If yes, the roof is **FRAGILE**.
 - Count the number of fasteners per sheet or the panel width per bearing end. If there are less than 3 - the roof is **FRAGILE**.
 - If corrosion is visible on the liner or inside face of the panel – the roof is **FRAGILE**.
 - If the joints in the liner or sandwich panels are not in close contact with the purlins – the roof is **FRAGILE**.
- If roof access is unavoidable where possible always use a fall restraint and/or fall arrest system. If no safety line system is available or the safety line system has not got a current test certificate do not access the roof.
- Before connecting to the fall restraint and/or fall arrest system check that it has been tested and certified within the last 12 months.
- Check that the fall restraint and/or fall arrest system posts are not corroded: if there are signs of corrosion do **NOT** use and do **NOT** access the roof.
- Before accessing any roof ensure that a specific assessment and method statement has been prepared and issued.
- If in any doubt do **NOT** access the roof until further checks can be made by a competent person.

MCRMA member companies can advise on the suitability and performance of materials, systems and assemblies which may be used within a tested and rated non-fragile roof assembly. In addition, the MCRMA Safety Lines Group has been 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. Specific guidance can be found at <http://mcrma.co.uk/safety-lines-group/>

Roof safety goes beyond establishing non-fragility of the roof area and component parts and it encompasses many other aspects during the various phases of construction. The published information by 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 at <http://mcrma.co.uk/roof-safety/>

This article first appeared in Total Contractor magazine, April 2018

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.

©2018 MCRMA - 106 Ruskin Avenue, Rogerstone, Newport, South Wales NP10 0BD
01633 895633 info@mcrma.co.uk www.mcrma.co.uk