SAFETECH
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September 2026
IN TOUCH
EHS Newsletter

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RETHINKING ROOFTOP SAFETY IN THE AGE OF SOLAR

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OHAIA association
OHAIA-A 005 (2026)

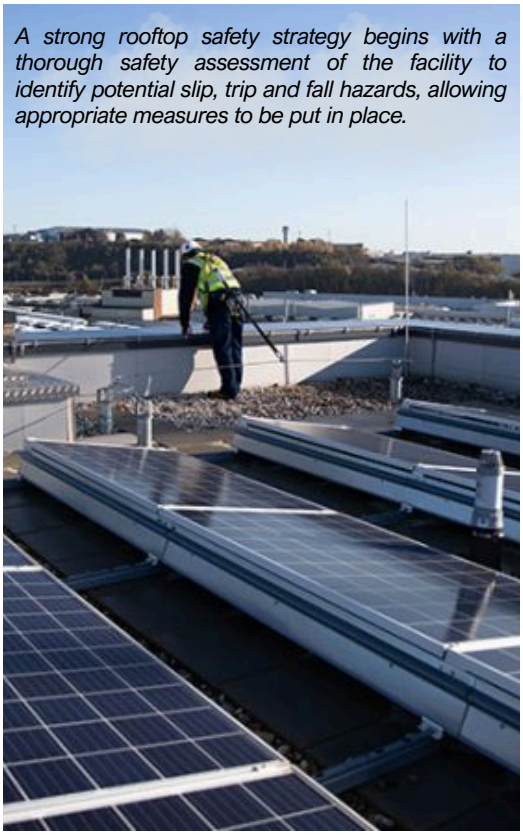
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The rapid growth of commercial solar is transforming rooftop environments and introducing new challenges for safe access and movement.

Once solar panels are installed, previously open roof areas can become significantly restricted, with available walking space reduced by as much as 40% to 80%. What was once an easily accessible roof can quickly become a more complex and hazardous workspace.

Installing solar panels can significantly alter the way a rooftop is used, creating new access and safety challenges that may not have existed before. Key concerns include:

- **Hidden openings:** Solar panels and mounting structures can obstruct the view of skylights, roof hatches and other openings, increasing the risk of workers stepping into areas they cannot see clearly.
- **Restricted movement:** A densely populated roof leaves fewer clear routes for personnel, potentially bringing them closer to unprotected edges, fragile roofing materials and other hazards.
- **Ongoing risk during maintenance:** Installing solar panels creates an ongoing need for rooftop access. Regular inspections, cleaning and maintenance mean workers will return to these areas repeatedly, increasing their exposure to potential rooftop hazards.
- **Electrical risks:** Contact with live electrical components can result in serious shock or electrocution.
- **Burn and fire hazards:** Electrical equipment and hot surfaces can cause burns and may present a fire risk.
- **Ladder safety:** Safe access requires suitable ladders that are correctly positioned and used.



A strong rooftop safety strategy begins with a thorough safety assessment of the facility to identify potential slip, trip and fall hazards, allowing appropriate measures to be put in place.

Falls from Height

Solar installations introduce additional equipment, cabling and infrastructure onto the roof, creating more obstacles that workers must navigate and increasing the potential for trips and falls. These added risks reinforce the importance of implementing appropriate fall protection measures wherever work is carried out on a rooftop with solar equipment.

Falls remain a major cause of construction fatalities, with many occurring from heights of just 1.8 to 9 metres - common elevations for commercial rooftops. Where workers are exposed to fall hazards, appropriate protection such as guardrails, safety nets, or personal fall arrest systems must be in place.

https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/solar-panels-are-changing-rooftop-risk-fall-protection-must-keep-up
https://www.keesafety.com/guides/improving-rooftop-safety-after-solar-installation

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CONTACT US TO PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING SERVICES FOR YOUR BUSINESS:

- Occupational Hygiene Surveys
- EHS Risk Assessments
- Ergonomics Risk Assessments
- EHS Management System Development and Implementation
- Environmental Monitoring
- Identification of EHS Legal Requirements and Compliance Audits
- Internal Auditor Training
- Specialised EHS Training

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WORKING AROUND MOVING EQUIPMENT



Heavy equipment is essential on construction sites, with machinery such as excavators, bulldozers, dump trucks and forklifts playing a vital role in completing demanding tasks. However, the use of this equipment also introduces significant safety hazards for workers. Accidents can occur in seconds, particularly when workers are unaware that they have entered an area where moving equipment or other hazards are present.

COMMON RISKS AROUND MOVING EQUIPMENT

CAUGHT-IN OR PINNED HAZARDS

Workers positioned within the operating path of heavy equipment can be exposed to severe injury, particularly when caught between moving machinery and stationary structures or objects.

BLIND SPOTS

Operators may not always have a clear view of workers in the vicinity of large machinery. Workers should therefore assume that they are not visible to the operator whenever the operator cannot be seen.

SWING RADIUS OF CRANES OR HOISTS

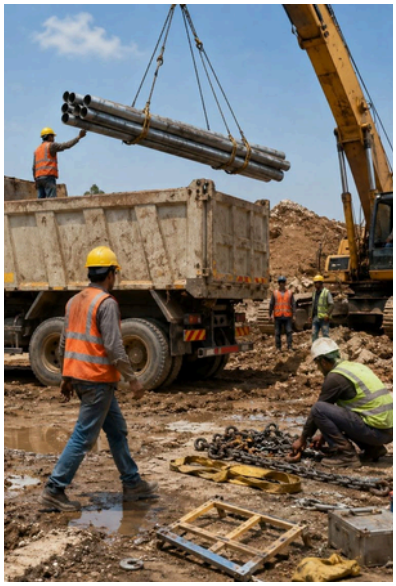
Workers should maintain a safe distance from equipment swing zones, as suspended or moving loads can shift unexpectedly and create a serious risk of injury.

REVERSING VEHICLES

On busy construction sites, the noise from machinery and other activities can easily drown out reversing alarms, increasing the risk that workers may not hear or recognise the warning in time.

SAFETY MEASURES WHEN WORKING NEAR MOVING MACHINERY

- **Communication:** Radios, hand signals and spotters help coordinate workers and operators, and reduce collision risks.
- **High-Visibility Clothing:** Bright and reflective clothing helps operators see workers, particularly in low-light conditions.
- **Maintain Operator Visibility:** Workers should stay visible to operators, maintain eye contact where possible, and use designated pedestrian areas.
- **Designated Walkways:** Clearly marked routes keep workers away from active equipment and hazardous areas.



- **Use Spotters:** to assist when machinery operates in confined areas or near people and structures.
- **Check Warning Systems:** Reversing alarms, warning lights and mirrors should be kept functional, to alert nearby workers.
- **Control Access:** Restrict equipment operating areas to essential personnel, to minimise exposure to hazards.
- **Maintain Safe Distances:** Workers should remain outside equipment swing zones and clear of moving vehicles and machinery.

https://safetymojo.com/toolbox-talks/working-around-moving-equipment