

Roof Work and the Edge

About 9 minutes to deliver

Six feet applies on a roof too, warning lines have real distances, and a safety monitor is a person with one job and no other.

Roofing carries one of the highest fatality rates of any trade, and almost all of it is falls from the edge.

LOW-SLOPE ROOFS

1926.501(b)(10): on a low-slope roof with unprotected sides and edges 6 feet or more above a lower level, you are protected by guardrails, safety nets, personal fall arrest, or a combination of a warning line system with guardrails, nets, arrest, or a safety monitoring system.

And one exception worth knowing exactly: on roofs 50 feet or less in width, a safety monitoring system alone is permitted — without a warning line. Wider than 50 feet and a monitor on their own is not compliant.

WARNING LINES HAVE NUMBERS

1926.502(f) is specific, and this is where sites get written up:

- The line goes around all sides of the roof work area.
- Not less than 6 feet from the edge when mechanical equipment is not in use.
- With mechanical equipment: 6 feet from the edge parallel to the direction of operation, and 10 feet from the edge perpendicular to it.
- Flagged at six-foot intervals, rigged so it takes a 16-pound pull without tipping the stanchion, and between 34 and 39 inches high.

A line of cones, spray paint, or chalk is not a warning line.

THE SAFETY MONITOR

If you are using one, it is a real job with real requirements:

- A competent person, on the same surface, in sight of and close enough to speak to the crew without raising their voice.
- They do nothing else. No carrying, no laying, no fetching, no phone. A monitor with a bundle of shingles in their arms is not monitoring.
- They warn when somebody is unaware or acting unsafely, and the crew has to comply promptly.
- No mechanical equipment inside the monitored area, and nobody in there who is not doing the roofing work.

STEEP ROOFS

1926.501(b)(11): on a steep roof at 6 feet or more, the options are narrower — guardrails with toeboards, safety nets, or personal fall arrest. No warning line, no monitor.

THE REST OF IT

- Skylights and smoke vents are holes. Screen, rail or cover them before anyone works near one. People go through them every year.
- Anchors before you need them. A roof anchor rated for 5,000 pounds, fitted to structure, and the arithmetic done — lanyard, deceleration, your height, sag — so you stop above the ground.
- Watch the edge you cannot see in snow, in ponding, and behind stacked material.
- Wind and wet. Membrane, frost and dew make a low slope behave like a steep one.

ASK THE CREW

- How wide is this roof, and does that change what protection we can use?
- If we are using a warning line, how far back is it, and who measured?
- Are the skylights covered before anybody goes up?

29 CFR 1926.501 · 29 CFR 1926.502

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ATTENDANCE RECORD

Roof Work and the Edge

About 9 minutes to deliver · 29 CFR 1926.501 · 29 CFR 1926.502

Date

Job / site

Delivered by

Company

#	Print name	Signature	Date
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I delivered this talk and determined it was suitable for this crew and this work.

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