

Expect the Unexpected at Height

Incident Date: February 19, 2023 / Location: Near Drayton Valley, AB / Industry: Roofing



AI Teaching Illustration. Conceptual worksite and fall exposure, not an exact reconstruction. OHS could not establish whether the fall began on the roof or ladder.

What Happened

A self-employed roofer was installing asphalt shingles near Drayton Valley. Working alone, the roofer fell and was found deceased. No one witnessed the incident. OHS identified a medical event as a significant contributor; the fall began from either the roof or ladder.

The roofline was 4.2 metres high. A harness and shock-absorbing lanyard were found on the roof, and the ladder feet were stuck in a frozen puddle. These observations do not establish the exact sequence. The story asks us to consider an unexpected medical emergency during work at height.

Plan for a Sudden Emergency

A person who suddenly becomes unwell may be unable to protect themselves or call for help. **Plan protection, communication and rescue before work begins.** The report does not establish whether a different arrangement would have prevented this death; these are lessons for our own work.

NEVER FORGET.

LET THEIR STORY PREVENT RECURRENCE.

What Safe Looks Like

If someone cannot protect themselves, what is already in place?



AI Teaching Illustration. Guardrails, access and contact are concepts, not an installation design. Select and verify suitable systems for the actual roof. **LSR link:** Working at Height.

1 Protect Before Work

Select suitable fall protection for the task, including safe access.

2 Secure the Access

Use a suitable secured ladder on a stable base, with safe landing access.

3 Plan the Response

Set effective contact, missed-check procedures and prompt rescue.

Investigation Outcome

OHS completed a preliminary assessment on February 9, 2024 and **did not proceed to an enforcement review**. The file was closed and the sole proprietorship was no longer operating. The public summary reports no charge, fine or supervisor penalty, and no employer corrective-action program. Its prevention messages address working alone, ladder access and fall protection.

Talk It Through with Your Crew

- 1 Where could sudden illness turn our work into a serious emergency?
- 2 What protects someone at height if they cannot react or keep their balance?
- 3 Who notices a missed check-in, calls for help and initiates safe rescue?
- 4 What would make you stop or refuse work until these arrangements are ready?

SAFETY COMES FIRST.

Your Right to Refuse – Alberta. You may refuse work you reasonably believe presents an undue hazard: a serious and immediate threat. Promptly report the refusal and reasons to your employer or supervisor. They must investigate. Contact Alberta OHS if unresolved. Take reasonable care not to endanger others. You are protected from reprisal.

Sources: [Alberta OHS investigation OHS-291170](#), pp. 2-4; summary completed April 4, 2024. [Alberta refusal guidance](#). Prepared October 19, 2026. LSR links are learning associations, not findings of a breach.