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American Anchor will review your roof anchors to ensure that all contractors on the roof are safe

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Wow, I cannot believe almost 8 years have passed since ANSI updated the fall protection codes for suspended access work, (ANSI I-14 Window Cleaning Safety Standard October 2001). OSHA has adopted the standard as the minimum care workers should use at a jobsite, BOMA international has accepted and endorsed the entire document and have become even more involved in the standards writing procedures, the International Window Cleaning Associations members have celebrated it's printing. Yet people still are being injured and killed in the window cleaning industry and other suspended access trades! What is up with that?

Whether it is user error, lack of training by the end user, or buildings not in compliance, this problem needs to be eliminated in the workplace. And as a building owner or its managing agent you need to be aware of the physical requirements that your property should meet to insure a safe and compliant workplace. In addition the contractor has to comply with the basic rules and guidelines of the longtime existing OSHA regulations and these relatively newer ANSI standards.

Now don't get me wrong, I have seen tremendous change over the last 20 and especially the last 8 years in the fall protection industry. The knowledge and compliance with the codes and standards has been tremendous and has saved many lives. Contractors are refusing to work on sites that do not meet the standard and cannot provide the written assurances, buildings are prohibiting suspended access work if anchorages are not available on the roof and/or contractors cannot supply documentation of worker training, and OSHA has been issuing citations using the I-14 as a guideline. All great steps forward.

But not all contractors regard safety as the first priority and not all owners select the contractor that has the knowledge necessary to perform the job safely. This may be a price issue in this current economic climate, or it may be a deeper and in my opinion more crucial problem, that of education. If both the contractor and the buildings management team are not aware of the requirements of Federal OSHA and ANSI to provide a safe workplace then we create an unsafe workplace. And always remember that as the building owner you have to provide a safe work place, this does include the roof and no insurance policy from the vendor will change this basic fact.

Education is vital to solving workplace safety, and if you have read this article this far then you are on the path to enlightenment. Roof top surveys, site visits, retrofit anchorage installations, a trained workforce, and complete work plans, are just some of the easy and cost effective solutions that will eliminate accidents and reduce costly lawsuits and litigation.

The first and easiest step is to visit your roof before you have contractors suspend equipment. When you get there perform a quick common sense survey of your own. This cost nothing and could save you millions. Ask yourself, what would the contractor tie his equipment and safety lines to? Remember they will need separate anchorages for every worker, and for both suspension and

safety lines, 2 workers, four anchorages. In fact the I-14 and OSHA both say these anchorages should be adequate and identifiable, so if you see nothing that seems to meet this basic requirement, then they most likely do not exist.

And do not believe just because you have had window cleaning and other services performed on your building for the last 20 years that the building must be safe. This false belief is one of the most common remarks I hear at meetings, and obviously one of the most dangerous. No one runs out and fixes a problem they have no idea even exists, so if the previous management company or manager did not do the homework, or simply cut out anchorages to provide new flowers in the entry area, you may have a problem on your hands. We have retrofit over 600 properties nation wide, and all of these previously had suspended access work performed; only now they are done safely and in compliance.

The bottom line is, buildings are required to have proper anchorages in the correct locations and in the necessary quantities if transportable suspended access equipment is going to be used by any trade. The contractor is required to use these anchorages to tie back his primary and backup systems, and these anchorages must meet the required load ratings. If the building meets these basic requirements and the contractor uses them as trained then everyone goes home at night. If one or both of the parties does not follow these requirements then we have a potential problem that may have tragic results for one or both of the parties involved.

The second and even easier step, call a company that specializes in fall protection for suspended access work. American Anchor will provide a site review, free of charge, which will include a written report identifying any current anchorages and most importantly, if any additional should be installed. We also can test and certify existing anchorages to insure they meet the load requirements and provide written certification as required by the standards. And if additional anchorages are required then we can provide whatever equipment is needed to make your property safe.

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