

# Fall protection initiatives get high marks



By Dawn Knoll

**S**everal times a year Central Okanagan School District 23 workers have to access school roofs to retrieve balls, pick up garbage, or clean debris from the drains. Performing these simple tasks meant that employees were often working within two metres (6 feet) of the roof's edge, which meant gearing up in full fall restraint and being tied off to an anchor point as required by Part 11 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation.

"We knew that the effort required, usually by the school custodian, to retrieve a lost ball from the roof was cumbersome at best," says Ken Emmons, District 23 health and safety officer. Emmons turned to the district's Operations health and safety committee for an easier way to make sure that employees still complied with the Regulation, but weren't being placed at risk while working at elevations.

In the end, it was the combined expertise of zone coordinator Bill Redlich, joint committee member Sam Carlsson, and welder Robin McMillan that led to the creation of the Nifty Nabber.

"It's quite ingenious," says Emmons. The concept comes from an existing device, called an E-Z Reacher, used by sanitation workers, gardeners, and hospital cleaning personnel as a grabbing tool. The E-Z Reacher is

Welder Robin McMillan demonstrates how easy it is to safely retrieve debris from the roof's edge with an innovative new tool called the Nifty Naber.

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approximately two metres long with a trigger handle and non-slip gripper cups. “We needed to modify the existing tool to increase its reach so that our employees, with their arms fully extended, could use it to work outside the two-metre limit of the roof's edge,” says Emmons.

Clayton Anderson, president of A & G Supplies in Kelowna, agreed to donate an E-Z Reacher to be used as a prototype for the project. To the back of

this, McMillan welded an aluminum plate that was light enough to extend the tool's reach without injuring the worker using it, and strong enough to withstand being used to pull debris away from the rooftop drains.

“We couldn't have asked for better results,” says Emmons. “We have a working Nifty Nabber that, at \$100 each, doesn't break the bank.” Emmons sees the Nifty Nabber as a valuable tool that will benefit other school districts, as well as anyone who is working within two metres of a roof's edge.

Other fall protection initiatives developed, with input from the joint

health and safety committee, include the installation of a multi-level ship ladder at Kelowna's Mount Boucherie Senior Secondary, so workers carrying tools or equipment can safely manoeuvre from one roof level to the next. Also, appropriate rooftop units (those weighing more than 363 kg) have been designated with a fall restraint and an arrow pointing to the tie-off connection.



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