MEDIA FACT SHEET

FALLS FROM LADDERS – RISKS AND PREVENTION

CPWR
THE CENTER FOR CONSTRUCTION RESEARCH AND TRAINING

The Problem for Construction Workers

Falls are the leading cause of injuries and fatalities in the construction industry, accounting for one-third of all on-the-job deaths.[1] One of the major contributors to these falls are ladders*. In 2016, 104 workers died from falls from ladders and an additional 7,140 were injured.[2]

Factors that lead to falls from ladders include ladder slips (top or bottom), overreaching, slipping on rungs/steps, defective equipment, and improper ladder selection for a given task. These falls can result in injuries ranging from sprains and fractures to death.[3]

Injuries and Fatalities are Preventable

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has a number of standards related to ladder use. The requirements for specific types of ladders can be found at *Stairways and Ladders: A Guide to OSHA Rules*. For all ladders, however, employers are required to[4]:

- Only use ladders for the purpose for which they were designed.
- Train each worker to recognize and minimize ladder-related hazards. For example, employers must teach them to not use metal ladders when working near overhead power lines, and to not work from the top rung/step.
- Designate a competent person† to inspect the ladder for visible defects before use. Ladders found to have defects must be removed from service and tagged with "Do Not Use" or similar language.
- Provide appropriate fall protection for workers.
- Ensure rungs, cleats, and steps are appropriately spaced and skid-resistant. They must also be maintained free of oil, grease, and other slipping hazards.
- Keep the area around a ladder clear and free from obstacles.
- Place ladders on level, solid footing.
- Secure or use a barricade around ladders that are placed in any location where they can be bumped or displaced by workplace activities or traffic, such as in passageways or doorways.
- Ensure ladders are not being used beyond their maximum intended load nor beyond their manufacturer's rated capacity.

CPWR Research and Resources

- **Ladder Hazard Alert Card** – a brief, image-driven handout to help workers understand ladder-related hazards and how to work safely. Available in English and Spanish.
- **Ladder Toolbox Talks** – short discussion guides for use by foremen or supervisors to raise worker awareness and discuss site-specific actions to identify and address ladder hazards.
  - ◊ **Extension Ladders** – Available in English and Spanish
  - ◊ **Step Ladders** – Available in English and Spanish
- Ladders Topic Page on stopconstructionfalls.com, a website dedicated to preventing falls in construction.
- **Ladder Infographic** – Available in English and Spanish
- Fatality Map – interactive map showing fall fatalities across the nation, including ones associated with ladders.
- Don't Fall For It! – video featuring first-person accounts of workers who have fallen from ladders, and information about how to work safely with ladders.
- **Studies** –
  - ◊ Development of Design Interventions for Preventing Falls from Fixed Ladders
  - ◊ Preventing Falls from Ladders in Construction: A Guide to Training Site Supervisors

Other Resources

- Safe Use of Extension Ladders – OSHA Fact Sheet, 2013
- Safe Use of Stepladders – OSHA Fact Sheet, 2013
- Safe Use of Job-Made Wooden Ladders – OSHA Fact Sheet, 2013
- Portable Ladder Safety – OSHA Quick Card, 2005 (Also available in Spanish)
- NIOSH Ladder Safety App – a free app for iOS and Android users from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health [NIOSH], designed to improve extension and step ladder safety.

About CPWR

CPWR - The Center for Construction Research and Training [CPWR] is a 501(c)3 non-profit dedicated to reducing injuries, illnesses, and fatalities in construction, and currently serves as NIOSH's National Construction Center. Through research, training, and service programs, CPWR works in partnership with industry stakeholders, safety and health professionals, academics, and key government agencies, to identify and find solutions for occupational hazards and improve the safety and health of construction workers. For more information, please visit: www.CPWR.com

References

[1]Occupational Safety and Health Administration [OSHA], 2017. *Commonly Used Statistics.* https://www.osha.gov/oshstats/commonstats.html

[2]U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI) - Current and Revised Data*. https://www.bls.gov/iif/oshcfoi1.htm. Accessed March 16, 2018. The data is for the private sector construction industry.

[3]OSHA, 2011. *Construction Focus Four: Fall Hazards.* https://www.osha.gov/dte/outreach/construction/focus_four/falls/falls_ig.pdf

[4]OSHA, 2003. *Stairways and Ladders: A Guide to OSHA Rules*. https://www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3124.pdf

[5]OSHA. *Competent Person*. https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/competentperson/index.html

* There are several different types of ladders. They include: stepladders, extension ladders, platform ladders, rolling ladders, and multi-purpose ladders, among others.

† OSHA defines a "competent person" as "one who is capable of identifying existing and predictable hazards in the surroundings or working conditions which are unsanitary, hazardous, or dangerous to employees, and who has authorization to take prompt corrective measures to eliminate them."[5]

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