

Fatality Narrative

Laborer Falls from Ladder*

Industry: Specialty trade contractor
Occupation: Laborer
Task: Standing on ladder removing screws from the aluminum trim of an office trailer
Type of Incident: Fall from elevation

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On July 15, 2004, a laborer was fatally injured when he fell from a straight portable ladder. The 47-year-old victim was employed by a contractor who was hired to move a surplus office trailer. The victim had spent the morning removing panels from the side of the trailer. The incident was unobserved, but investigators determined that the victim was standing on a ladder propped against the side of an office trailer and was removing screws from the aluminum trim when he fell 5 or 6 feet, striking his head on asphalt pavement below. The victim's medical condition may have been a factor in this incident. He had recently had surgery and the temperature that day reached a high of 98 degrees. That morning he had spoken to several people about the heat and stated that he felt dizzy when he bent over.

Requirements/Recommendations

(! Indicates items required by law)

- ! The employer should determine if there are safer alternatives to performing a job rather than using ladders.
- ! If a ladder is the best tool for the job then the employer needs to make sure all workers are properly trained in the safe use of ladders.
- ! Only use ladders for the purpose that they are designed. Make sure the ladder is safe to use and in good working condition.
- ! Ladders must be secured at the top and the bottom of the ladder.
- ! When setting up a ladder, make sure the ladder is placed on a firm, level surface and set at a ratio of 4:1.
- ! Always face the ladder and hold onto the side rails with both hands. Keep your body centered between the rails, and never carry tools or materials in your hand when going up or down the ladder.
- Fitness for duty concerns should be addressed by employers and site supervisors when workers report health problems.
- A worker under medical treatment should make the treating physician aware of job responsibilities and inform the employer or supervisor of any limitations set by the physician.

State Wide Statistics: This was the 51st out of 92 work-related fatalities in Washington State during the year 2004, and was the 10th out of 17 construction-related fatalities during the year.

This bulletin was developed at the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries to alert employers and employees in a timely manner of a tragic loss of life of a worker in Washington State. We encourage you to consider the above information as you make safety decisions for or recommendations to your company or constituency. The information in this notice is based on preliminary data ONLY and does not represent final determinations regarding the nature of the incident or conclusions regarding the cause of the fatality.

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