

Electrician Falls from Ladder or Awning*

Industry: Plumbing, heating, and air-conditioning contractors
Task: Connecting electrical conduit to install a heat pump
Occupation: Journeyman electrician
Type of Incident: Fall

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Incident Date: October 21, 2009
Case No.: 09WA04901
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On October 21, 2009, an electrician suffered fatal injuries when he fell while installing electrical conduit. The journeyman electrician, 70, worked for three years for a plumbing, heating, and air-conditioning contractor. The victim and a company foreman were installing a heat pump as part of a heating and air conditioning system for a residence. The victim's task was to make an electrical conduit connection under the eaves of a shed attached to the house. The conduit connection was between the eaves and a small wooden awning attached above the shed door. There were no witnesses, but there are two likely scenarios. The victim may have placed a ladder against the house to the right of the awning and climbed onto the awning to connect the conduit. This may have collapsed the awning, dropping the victim to the ground where he hit his head on the concrete porch below. The second possibility is that the victim placed the ladder directly against the awning. His weight on the ladder may have caused the awning to collapse, again, sending the victim to the ground. A 24-foot extension ladder and an 8-foot folding step ladder were found on the ground; it is not known which was used. The victim was taken to a hospital and died six days later from head injuries.



Scene showing where an awning was attached above the shed door before it collapsed, causing the victim to fall.

Requirements

- Train employees to recognize ladder hazards and procedures to minimize hazards. See WAC 296-876-15005.
- Ensure that the top support of the ladder is reasonably able to support the weight of the ladder and the person using it. See WAC 296-876-40015.
- Determine whether the surfaces on which an employee will be working will support the employee. See WAC 296-155-505.
- Ensure employees do not work from the top cap or top step of stepladder. See WAC 296-876-40050.

Recommendations

- Employees should be trained to inspect work surfaces and only be allowed to work on surfaces that have the strength and integrity to support them and their equipment safely.
- Employers should consider alternate and safer means of working at height other than a ladder, such as a scaffold or elevating work platform.

State Wide Statistics: This was number 43 out of 65 work-related fatalities in Washington State during 2009, and was number 5 out of 7 construction-related fatalities.

**This bulletin was developed to alert employers and employees of a tragic loss of life of a worker in Washington State and 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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