

FATALITY NARRATIVE

Construction Laborer Falls when Ladder Breaks

Industry: Commercial and Institutional
Building Construction
Task: Inspecting fire sprinkler
Occupation: Construction laborer

Type of Incident: Fall from ladder
Incident Date: January 27, 2016
Release Date: February 9, 2017
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In January of 2016, a 53-year-old construction laborer was injured and later died after an extension ladder he was climbing broke and he fell 12 feet. On the day of the incident, the victim and a co-worker were installing flashing over fire sprinkler heads on the exterior of a building. The victim wanted to inspect a sprinkler mounted on the building exterior. He placed a ladder against the side of the building. The ladder was a 24-foot, Type 2 medium duty/ commercial use fiberglass extension ladder with a load capacity of 225lbs. The other worker stood at the bottom of the ladder holding its rails while the victim climbed up the ladder. As he was climbing, the ladder broke at its upper section. It bent and broke at both rails. The victim fell 12 feet to the asphalt surface of the ground. He suffered multiple injuries and was in a coma for several weeks before he died. Investigators were unable to determine exactly why the ladder failed. A contributing factor was



Incident scene with broken 24-foot fiberglass ladder.

that the ladder had pre-existing fractures that were not the result of a manufacturing defect. The victim's weight was not determined and it is unknown whether it was a factor.

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Requirements

- Keep ladders in good, usable condition.
See [WAC 296-155-876-30005\(1\)](#)
- Have a competent person regularly inspect a ladder to ensure that it is safe to use. Look for cracks, splits, dents, bends, corrosion, and missing hardware.
See [WAC 296-876-30005\(3\)](#)
- Make sure any ladder with structural damage or other hazardous defect is: (a) Marked to identify it as defective or tagged with "do not use" or similar language, (b) Removed from service.
See [WAC 296-876-30005\(4\)](#)
- Do not overload ladders. Do not exceed the (a) Maximum intended load or (b) Manufacturer's rated capacity. The load or capacity of the ladder includes the weight of the user, tools, and materials.
See [WAC 296-876-40005\(2\)](#)

Recommendation

Consider purchasing a ladder with a high duty rating to ensure that it is able to withstand the loads it will be subjected to.

Resources

Ladder Safety, Washington State Dept. of Labor and Industries.
www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Topics/AtoZ/LadderSafety/

This narrative 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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