

Employer sees a change in attitude regarding safety after employee injury

Industry: Construction
Task: Roofing

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Occupation: Laborer

“Don’t underestimate the need for additional training” is the message the owner of a construction company would like to pass along to employers of young workers. The employer had a 21-year-old worker who broke his leg when the bottom of the ladder slid and the worker fell 13 feet to the floor of a log cabin. As the ladder slid, the worker ‘surfed’ down the ladder and his left leg was caught between two rungs. Both bones in his lower leg broke as he fell to the floor. The ladder had worn rubber soles and was not secured at the top or bottom. The use of a toe board would have also helped prevent sliding.

Working indoors with a ladder was not expected at this jobsite. Hazards associated with working on ladders indoors were not part of the employer’s written Accident Prevention Plan (APP). The plans had not been changed to address the new work setting. Changes in working conditions, the potential hazards associated with those changes, and what safety measures would be taken to ensure safety were not discussed with employees.

The employer viewed the injury as an opportunity to retrain employees. The company’s weekly safety meeting was used to review the company’s ladder safety training. The meeting also discussed the importance of changing the APP when working conditions change. The employer believes there has been a change in the attitudes of his young workers around safety since the accident. Follow up safety meeting gave workers a chance to ask questions and better understand their roles in making the workplace safe.



Employer Requirements

- A written ladder safety program for training employees in the selection, use, inspection, care, and maintenance of ladders in accordance with Chapter 296-876, Washington Administrative Code.
- Employee ladder safety retraining as necessary to ensure employees retain, understand, and remain current regarding ladder safety. See WAC 296-876-15005.
- Train young workers as to their role in maintaining a safe workplace. See WAC 296-155-100 and WAC 296-155-105.
- See Ladders, Portable and Fixed - WAC 296-876-400 for Washington ladder regulations (except agriculture).

Recommendations

- Whenever possible, use safer alternatives such as scaffolding to work at elevation.
- Bring multiple ladders to the jobsite so that employees can select the correct ladder for the job and also have back-up ladders available to replace defective units.
- Use the Construction Safety Checklist to analyze site-specific hazards and determine measures to minimize hazard(s).

Resources

- Free workplace safety and health consultations are available from L&I: www.safetyconsultants.lni.wa.gov
- For more ladder safety tips go to L&I’s Ladder Safety webpage (<http://1.usa.gov/wcWSFB>) or check out OSHA’s Portable Ladder Safety QuickCards (<http://1.usa.gov/kKJq3u>)
- Construction Safety Checklist: <http://1.usa.gov/zSYjU4>

Need more information?

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