

4/06/2019

Serious Incident

- **Incident date:** 19/04/2019
- **Event:** Painter falls from heights working on a ladder
- **Location:** WILLOUGHBY

Incident overview

A painter working from the side of a house fell from a ladder and broke his ankle. He was taken to hospital for treatment.



Images show the approximate ladder position before and after the fall.

The investigation

- SafeWork NSW Inspectors responded to the incident.
- SafeWork NSW has commenced an investigation to determine the cause and circumstances of the incident.

Our [Prosecution Guidelines \(January 2018\)](#) outline our approach to prosecutions and Safe Work Australia's [National Compliance and Enforcement Policy](#) provides guidance on their approach to compliance. These

documents set out factors that will be considered in determining the investigative approach and appropriate outcome.

Safety Information

Businesses are reminded of their duty to identify hazards and manage risks to health and safety in accordance with the provisions of the [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#) and [Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017](#).

Businesses are reminded to consider reasonably practicable control measures to manage the risk of falls from heights, particularly when working on ladders.

It's best to work from the ground whenever possible and only use ladders for simple access jobs, or for short duration light duty work.

You should also consider alternatives to a ladder, such as scaffolding or an elevated work platform.

If a ladder is the only option, the following precautions can help avoid injury:

- Choose the right ladder for the job. It should meet Australian standards and the load requirements of the job.
- Inspect the ladder for damage before each use.
- Only use a ladder if you are physically-capable of doing so.
- Set up the ladder on a flat, stable surface. If this isn't possible then use a ladder that includes ladder safety devices like leg levellers, anti-slip gutter guards and stabilisers.
- Always maintain three points of contact when climbing or descending the ladder. This means two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand.
- Only take small items up or down a ladder – never large or heavy items such as building materials. Only carry items that allow you to maintain three points of contact.
- Never lean or reach away from the ladder while using it.
- The combined weight of the person using the ladder and any items or tools should never exceed the working load limit on the ladder.
- A-frame (Step) ladders should only be used when locked in the fully-open position.
- If you're using a straight ladder or an extension ladder, secure it at the top, bottom or both. If this isn't possible then have someone hold the ladder in place while in use.
- Straight/extension ladders should be angled at a ratio of 1:4. That is, position the base of the ladder 1 metre away from the structure for every 4 metres of height.
- Do not work from the top two rungs of a ladder, and never straddle the top of an A-frame ladder.
- When climbing down, remain facing the ladder and climb to the bottom rung before stepping off.

Further information

You can also refer to the following guidance materials:

- [Safe use of ladders video](#)
- [Preventing falls in housing construction Code of Practice](#)
- [Managing risks of falls in a workplace Code of Practice](#)
- [Ladder safety page – Safe Work Australia](#)
- [Australian standards related to ladders](#)

Support for injured persons and family members affected by a serious workplace incident

Our Coordinator Family Liaison can provide information on counselling and other support to injured workers and to close family members when a relative has died or is seriously injured in the workplace. Contact us on 13 10 50 or contact@safework.nsw.gov.au

Visit www.coroners.justice.nsw.gov.au for information about the State Coroner.

About this information release

We have issued this information to draw attention to the occurrence of a serious injuryserious injuryserious injuryserious injury in the painting industry. Investigations are ongoing and further information may be published as it becomes available.

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing. Users are reminded of the need to ensure any information upon which they rely is up to date and to check the currency of the information with the appropriate SafeWork NSW officer or the user's independent adviser. No conclusions should be drawn from the information in this publication about the cause of the incident or the culpability of any party.

All photographs were taken by SafeWork NSW.