Lesson Learned

Step Ladder ShiftedCausingEmployee To Lose Balance

An employee was working above a drop ceiling from an 8’ step ladder to re-install a pipe hanger rod onto a trapeze hanger. This task required both hands to be above the drop ceiling grid to thread the rod back onto the hanger. While performing this task the rear ladder rails shifted causing the ladder to “walk”. This caused the employee to lose their balance and start to fall. In response the employee grabbed onto an installed hanger rod. The employee’s hand slide down the rod and contacted the edge of the unistrut which was attached at the bottom of the hanger rod. The sharp edge of the unistrut caused a deep laceration on the palm of the employee’s hand which required medical treatment.

The incident investigation team determined the ladder to be damaged from wear and tear, so the ladder was removed from service and disposed of.

To prevent similar incidents in the future employees should:

- Complete Ladder Safety Training every three years. Training can be completed online or in the classroom by taking Ladder Safety-3015, Ladder and Lighting Safety-3015BC, or Fall Prevention-4420. Log into CU Learn to request training or complete online.
  - Supervisors can verify training status on CU Learn.
- Maintain all ladders in a good condition and always perform a pre use inspection. Start at the bottom and inspect the:
  - Feet for damage and ensure slip-resistant pads are secure.
  - Ladder for cracks, bends, splits and foreign debris (grease, mud, oil) on side rails, rungs, and steps.
  - Rung/step-to-side rail connections, hardware, fittings, accessories and rung locks if applicable.
  - All bolts and rivets must be secure and tight.
  - Pivotal connections, spreader braces and the rung-locks function properly.
- Dispose of all ladders that are damaged, defective, or excessively worn.
- Gloves are exceptionally useful at eliminating or reducing the severity of hand injuries. Wear the required personal protective equipment (PPE) at all times when performing work tasks. PPE is not optional or at the discretion of employees.
  - To determine required PPE refer to the PPE Charts on EHS’s webpage.
  - If your task is not listed consult the equipment’s operations manual or contact EHS at AskEHS@cornell.edu or 607-255-8200.

Reminder for all employees: Cornell’s Emergency Services has staff on duty 24/7 and provides support to all injured persons on campus. Their services include injury evaluations, first-aid, and more. Contact 607-255-1111 to initiate an injury or emergency response.