Extension Ladder Feet Slid Causing Employee To Fall

An employee was working from a 24’ extension ladder scraping loose paint from the wood trim on the building’s exterior. At the time of incident the employee was working from the building’s entryway and had extended the ladder by one-rung making the total ladder length to be 13’ 3”, see picture below. To capture the falling paint chips and debris the employee placed a drop cloth underneath his work area.

While scrapping paint chips approximately 15’ above the entryway the feet of the ladder kicked-out and began sliding away from the building. This caused the employee and ladder to fall down onto the entryway. While falling the employee’s right foot slipped through the ladder rungs and absorbed the brunt of the impact. The employee sustained a compound fracture to their leg requiring significant medical treatment.

To prevent similar incidents in the future employees should:

- Set-up ladders on stable and level surfaces.
- When placing your ladder, remember the four-to-one rule: for every four feet of ladder height, move the base one foot away from the structure, see diagram below.
- Secure the extension ladder. A co-worker shall secure the ladder at its base until it can be tied-off at the top. When necessary secure ladder’s feet to prevent incidental movement on declines, inclines, or slippery surfaces.
- Keep the area around the top and bottom of a ladder clear of debris and obstructions.
- Face the ladder when ascending or descending and maintain your belt buckle within the side rails at all times.
- Never carry any object or load while climbing. Always Use the 3-Point Rule: At least two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand, should be in contact with the ladder at all times. Keep tools in a tool belt in order to free up your hands for climbing. Heavy or bulky items should be brought up, roped up or handed only after you have reached the top.
- Complete Ladder Safety Training every three years for more information visit CU Learn.
- When installing ladders in front of doors install a barricade or warning tape with signage instructing passer byers of the hazards, e.g. DANGER: Overhead Work Do Not Enter.
  - Safety signage templates and a guidance document can be found on EHS webpage.