

DON'T FALL FOR IT!

Fact Sheet #1

Protect Yourself from Fatal or Crippling Falls

Falls are the leading cause of on-the-job deaths in construction.

Each year, 53 people die and another 8,300 are injured falling from a ladder.

Most ladder deaths involve falls of 10 feet or less.



Ed Kandel, Roofer injured in fall

"The accident happened right after lunch... I was the first one going up the ladder and I was almost to the roof. And another guy had followed me up the ladder...It was an old ladder and it busted in the middle."

No one **plans** to fall. It happens in an instant. Most of us have thought about what we'd do if it happened. We think, "I'd grab something. I'd catch myself— just like they do in the movies."

Can you really catch yourself if you fall?

The average person's reaction time is half a second. In that time you fall 4 feet.

As you fall, gravity pulls you down and your speed quickly increases. That means your impact force increases too. And, once you start falling, you will stop only when you hit a lower surface.

Still think you can catch yourself? A person who weighs about 200 pounds and falls just 6 feet will hit the ground with almost **10,000** pounds of force. That's just too much for anyone's grip.

Catching yourself during a fall is a Hollywood fantasy.

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Think it couldn't happen to you?

Then think again. Here are some real-life stories of construction workers who died falling from ladders on the job.

Falling Less than 6 Feet

A 46-year-old sheet metal worker was working from a stepladder, adding a fire damper to a previously installed sheet metal plenum at a hospital. He had his right foot on the fifth step, less than 5 feet off the ground, and his left foot one step above. Working with his feet on two different steps put an uneven weight on the ladder. A co-worker said the ladder spun around and caught the sheet metal worker's legs in the steps. He fell and struck his head on the edge of a metal floor plate. With one false move, his life was cut short.

What do you think would have prevented his death?

Misusing a Stepladder

Two drywall finishers were working on a multilevel brick high school. They were putting filler compound over the heads of screws that secured sheetrock to the interior walls. To reach the upper sections, one of the finishers brought a stepladder onto his scaffold platform. He leaned the top of the stepladder against the wall and started to climb. The force exerted at the ladder's foot caused the scaffold to roll – even though it was equipped with 8-inch rubber tires and locking casters. The drywall finisher fell headfirst onto a concrete floor 22 feet below. He died instantly, leaving his family behind.

How could his death have been prevented?

Falling from the Top Rung

A 54-year-old tradesman was working on a grocery store, constructing a wall near a stairwell leading to the basement. He stood on the top rung of an 8-foot ladder to align a chalk line and fell. He landed about 16 feet below, striking the concrete stairs leading into the building's basement. He was carried off the job site in a body bag.

What could have been done to prevent his death?

Losing your balance

A 37-year-old carpenter and two co-workers were working outside on a residence. Out of his co-workers' sight, the carpenter was standing on a stepladder, affixing blocks of wood to the ceiling rafters of a covered porch. He apparently lost his balance and fell from the ladder. He struck his head on a concrete block retaining wall about 6 feet below the open-sided porch floor. When his co-workers found him, he was unconscious but breathing. The foreman called an ambulance. The carpenter was stabilized and transported to the hospital. Two days later, he was pronounced brain dead. Life support was removed and he died that day.

What would you have done to prevent his death?

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