

SAFETY BULLETIN

81 - Safe Use of Ladders

OVERVIEW

Every year, throughout Australia there are many incidents involving people falling from ladders. This often results in serious injuries and can be attributed to the incorrect or inappropriate use of ladders. Figure 1 outlines the number of working at heights related fatalities that have occurred over the past 5 years. You will note that the most common cause relates to falls from a ladder.

At Programmed, ladder use is routinely undertaken in parts of our business. A recent event involving a painter working from an extension ladder has resulted in a fall from a substantial height, with the worker suffering multiple fractures to their vertebrae.

Whilst the worker involved will make a full recovery, the seriousness of the injury is significant and has prompted a review of work practices where ladders are being used. The purpose of this Bulletin is to reiterate the importance of safe use of ladders, in the aim to prevent similar occurrences across our organisation.

WHAT ACTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN TO MINIMISE THE RISK OF FALL?

- ▶ If work is required to be completed at heights, consider the type of equipment that will allow the work to be undertaken safely. **Preference should always be given to the use of scaffold or work platforms over ladders.**
- ▶ Ladders should only be used when all other access methods have been exhausted and for short duration tasks.
- ▶ Risk assessments such as Safe Work Method Statements/Job Safety Environmental Analysis are to be completed outlining the potential hazards and to document the required controls to manage to the fall risk.
- ▶ Where the risk assessment has outlined the use of ladders as a requirement, the correct type of ladder is to be selected. For some tasks a step ladder or extension ladder will be appropriate however a platform ladder may be the safest option.
- ▶ Pre-use checks are to be undertaken to ensure the ladder is free from damage i.e. no cracks, dents, missing components etc.
- ▶ Personnel using ladders must be deemed competent to do so
- ▶ Ladders are to be set up on a firm, stable surface.
- ▶ Extension ladders to be secured at the top and bottom.

- ▶ Extension ladders should be position at an angled ratio of 1:4. That is, position the base of the ladder 1 metre away from the structure for every 4 metres of height.
- ▶ Step ladders are to be used in the fully open position

Remember – your personal safety is paramount. When work from ladders is required, it is important that you take the time to plan the work and implement these measures to prevent the risk of injury.

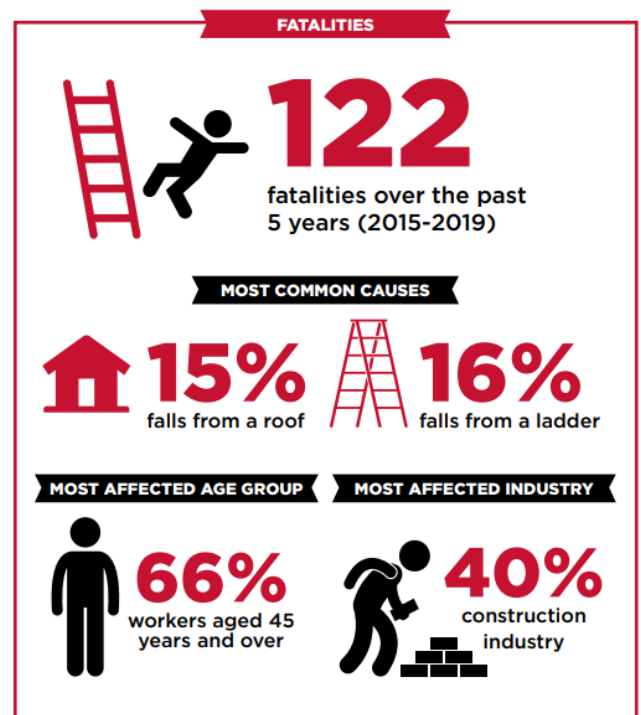


Figure 1 - Safe Work Australia – Falls from height data 2015-2019.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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Report all incidents and near misses