

Date: Tue, 13 Feb 2001 09:41:09 -0700
From: Meredith Brown <racer@lanl.gov>
Subject: Yellow Alert: Fall From Fixed Ladder Causes Injury

Title: Yellow Alert- Fall From Fixed Ladder Causes Injury

Date: 1/31/01 Identifier: 2001-KO-SNL-7126-0001

Summary: Even the most simple and repetitive of tasks, such as climbing a fixed ladder, requires a person's utmost focus. Tasks that are often considered low hazard and routine may have the potential to result in significant injuries to personnel.

Discussion: Late in the afternoon of November 10, 2000, a maintenance employee was descending from a fixed ladder and fell approximately five feet to the floor. The employee sustained injuries to the left foot (ankle) and right knee. The employee was hospitalized and required surgery to both the knee and ankle. It is anticipated that the employee will not return back to their regular work activity for several months.

Analysis: The analysis of this event identified several lessons learned. The data that was gathered indicated that both the accident and the post-accident response (scene preservation) identified concerns/issues that needed to be shared. Even the most simple and repetitive of tasks, such as climbing a fixed ladder, requires a person's utmost of focus. Tasks that are often considered low hazard and routine by personnel performing those tasks may still have the potential to result in significant injuries. In this case a vertical fall from approximately five feet resulted in serious injuries. This event is a prime example of how the best of employees, from both the standpoint of experience and training, can have a moment's loss of focus, lose three point contact to the ladder, fall and sustain major injuries. Investigation of the accident response identified that the accident scene preservation was not performed in accordance with SNL guidance. No critical information associated with this accident was lost as a result of this oversight, but the potential existed. Photos and measurements can be critical to determining accident causes and developing corrective actions that will result in a safer work environment. When considering the severity of this event, it is important to remind employees that they should not hesitate to request 911 emergency response assistance. Once the request was made, the SNL 911 emergency response to this accident was exemplary.

Resolution: Evaluate fixed ladders and their construction as well as installation using OSHA requirements as a basis for the review. Emphasize to employees the importance of focusing on the task at hand regardless of its repetitiveness and simplicity. Communicate the outcome of a moment's loss of focus and how it can impact the employee. Review and update ladder safety training. Identify employees that need the training and facilitate their receiving it on a regularly scheduled basis. Convey the potential hazards of this activity to both maintenance, line using organizations, and construction people on the site.

Descriptor: Yellow / Caution
DOE Functional Category: Maintenance - Facility
Hazard: Personal Injury / Exposure - Other

ISM: Analyze Hazards, Define Work, Develop / Implement Controls, Perform Work

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References: 29CFR1910.27; DOE OSH Technical Reference, Chapter 8, Appendix C