

# Lessons Learned

## Unsafe Use of Ladders



### What Happened?

In these two photos of inappropriate use of ladders, fortunately nothing. EHS intervened and stopped the unsafe acts, but **falls from portable ladders are one of the leading causes of occupational fatalities and injuries each year.**

In the top right photo, a combination ladder was being used to access the deck of the sidewalk shed and fell short of its objective. Straight, combination and extension ladders must be long enough to reach the objective without having to stand on the top three rungs. If used to access an elevated surface, the ladder must extend at least 3 feet above the point of support/contact to allow safe dismounting and mounting.

The photo on the bottom right shows a worker standing on the top step of a step ladder which was equipped with a warning label that clearly stated: "Do Not Climb, Stand or Sit Above Second Step from Top". **Stepladders should never be leaned against a wall or used as a straight ladder.**

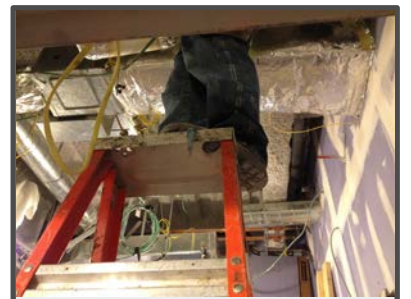
### Why Did This Happen?

The most common causes of improper use of ladders include, but are not limited to:

- Lack of training.
- Proper ladders (size or type) not available for use.
- Proper ladders (size or type) available but not used (usually employee/worker felt it was too much effort to get it).
- Carelessness.

### Lessons Learned

- While most ladders are not complex tools, they are tools nevertheless, and as such, users should be familiar with the manufacturer's instructions for use. The most important safety tips about the use and dangers of a ladder can be found on the warning labels attached to the side rail of all ladders.
- Additional information about ladder safety can be in the [EHS Fall Protection Program Manual](#).



Above: two accidents waiting to happen.

