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INCIDENT ALERT

A pipe fitter was in the process of installing 2 ½” copper pipe overhead. The pipe he was working with was approximately 10 feet long and the hangers the pipe was to be installed in were approximately 10 feet above the floor. The worker decided he would use a ladder to reach his work area. He had climbed the ladder while holding the pipe and slid one end into one of the hangers. After looking the area over, it appeared to him he would need to adjust one pipe hanger to allow him to run the pipe beneath some duct work that had previously been installed. He rested the pipe on his shoulder to perform the task and the pipe began to slip. He grabbed the pipe with his left hand to keep it from falling. He immediately felt pain in his shoulder and reported it to his supervisor, who transported him to a nearby medical facility where he was examined and received pain medication and was released to return to restricted duty.

LESSONS LEARNED

The contractor held a safety meeting with the entire site following the injury and all of the workers were asked to come up with ways the injury could have been prevented. The group felt that the injury was a result of taking an unsafe position on the ladder and attempting to perform two tasks at once (balancing the pipe while attempting to adjust the hanger). Suggestions from the group included placing the length of pipe on the floor before adjusting the hanger.

A task plan had been developed for the activity, but it described using a scissors lift for the activity and not the use of a ladder. Normally, when installing pipe from a scissors lift, the pipe is placed on the lift and brought up to the installation point. A different set of activities are necessary when using a ladder to reach the installation point. Two people would be needed to safely perform the task, with one climbing the ladder to perform the installation and the other handing the pipe up to them. This would have allowed the installer to hand the length of pipe back down, then readjust the hanger. Remember, it is never safe to climb a ladder while holding something in your hands!

ACTION ITEMS

1. Ask your contractor about how they manage job hazard analysis and task planning for common daily tasks. Ask how workers are included in the task planning and job hazard analysis process. Encourage your contractors to help train their employees in identifying common hazards associated with daily tasks.

2. Watch for tasks that may result in similar injuries during your walk through. Are workers carrying material up ladders? Is the area below overhead work properly controlled? Are workers using material handling equipment? Are better, safer, methods for material handling available? Have workers addressed material handling hazards during the task planning process?
3. Share this Incident Alert with your contractor and ask them to share it with their workers.

Distribution:
All CPO Staff