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INCIDENT ALERT

A steamfitter apprentice was tasked with trimming threaded rods that had been installed in the ceiling of a building. The rods were approximately 8 feet long and extended well below the planned elevation of pipe hangers that were soon to be installed. The worker chose to use a 10 foot tall stepladder and portable band saw to perform the work. He climbed the ladder and placed the end of the rod against the top plate of the ladder to steady it. He grasped the saw with both hands and began cutting. As he was completing the cut and the end of the rod began to come loose he released his hold on the saw with his right hand and grabbed the cut end to keep it from falling to the floor. The saw fell across his right forearm, cutting through his shirt sleeve and causing a laceration. He reported the injury to his supervisor who transported him to a nearby medical facility where he received stitches and was released to return to work.

LESSONS LEARNED

During the incident investigation several issues were identified. First, though a ladder allowed him to reach his work area a portable scaffold would have given him a more steady work platform. A bucket to catch the rod end could then have been set on the scaffold deck eliminating the concern about material falling to the floor. Also, the worker selected tools that certainly could accomplish the work, but may not have been the best for the job. Portable band saws weigh between 15 and 20 pounds and are cumbersome to use. They are not designed to be held steady with one hand. Using a different type of saw may have made the job easier and the tool would have been more easily controlled. Lastly, assigning an additional person to the task would have allowed one worker to steady the rod and the other to more safely complete the cut.

A good task specific planning effort, overseen by an experienced journeyman, might have identified better ways to perform the task and the injury may have been prevented.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Talk with your contractor about how they and their subcontractors assign tasks to less experienced workers. Ask how new workers are trained in the appropriate use of task planning. Ask how they assure that less experienced workers get the proper oversight and coaching.

2. Watch for activities that may result in similar injuries during your walkthrough. Are workers placing themselves in a safe working position? Are methods for controlling material in place? Are they using good steady work platforms? Have they planned their task?

3. Share this Incident Alert with your contractor and ask them to share it with their workers.

Distribution:
All CPO Staff

REV. (DATE)