Prepared by Ron Fouty

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INCIDENT ALERT

A group of laborers were tasked with the installation of windows. They were using a personnel lift to assist in the installation. Foul weather was threatening, and they decided on installing some plastic sheeting over the lift to prevent rain from impacting their work. One of the laborers was assisting the installation from a ladder when the ladder collapsed. He fell to the ground and extended his right arm to break his fall. He felt pain in his wrist and reported the injury to his foreman. The worker was transported to a nearby medical clinic where the doctor determined he had suffered a sprained wrist. The doctor outlined work restrictions to assist in healing, gave him a prescription for pain medication, and released him to return to work.

LESSONS LEARNED

The incident investigation highlighted several interesting issues. First, the worker was assisting in pulling the plastic sheeting into place, which may have over-balanced him and put side pressure on the ladder. The spreaders that maintain the alignment of the legs of the ladder had both bent. The ladder he was using appeared to be fairly new and in good condition. Closer examination showed that the ladder had a rated capacity of 225 pounds. The worker appeared to weigh in excess of that amount. Inspecting ladders (even new ones) prior to use and being aware of the limitations of the equipment are critical to preventing injuries such as this one. Also, a task plan for the work had not been developed.

The foreman for the crew had indicated he has sent an apprentice to purchase ladders for use at the job site. The apprentice had apparently thought the ladder he purchased would be adequate for the work, either not paying attention to the weight rating or not knowing ladders have weight limitations. This highlights the importance of purchasing the appropriate tools for the job at hand. All workers, even those performing purchasing duties, have an impact on jobsite safety and injury prevention.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Talk with your contractor about how they reinforce the need for task planning and hazard assessment with their subcontractors. Ask about their requirements for equipment inspection prior to use and how that requirement is reinforced. Ask about their requirements for ladder safety training, and how their purchasing personnel are engaged in project safety.

2. Watch for activities that may result in similar exposures to injury during your walkthrough. Are workers using ladders in a safe manner? Are they aware of the limitations of the ladder?

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

Distribution:
All CPO Staff