

Lessons Learned

Ladder Incident

March 17, 2022

What Happened:

An employee used a four-foot ladder to help reconfigure an acoustic ceiling grid system. The employee was working alone and was removing/replacing the existing runners and cross tees to accommodate the future installation of light fixtures. At some point, the employee encountered resistance while removing a section of the grid system. After using more force with his hands to detach the grid components, the section, he was holding suddenly disconnected, causing him to lose his balance, fall off the ladder and dislocate his left shoulder when he landed on the floor.

Incident causes:

The direct cause of this incident was the sudden forceful movement of the grid system disconnecting in the employee's hands which caused him to lose his balance and fall.

The root cause of the incident was that when removing the ceiling grid system proved more difficult than anticipated; the employee decided to continue working instead of getting help, moving the ladder into a better position, or considering another removal method.

Steps that can be taken to prevent this type of incident:

- Before using a ladder, employees should complete a one-time (online) Ladder Safety Training. This training is required because falls from ladders can result in serious injury. In addition to the initial ladder safety training, a regular refresher will help reinforce safe work practices such as inspecting ladders before use and proper set-up. The training can be accessed at the University of California Learning Center (UCLC).
- Supervisors should review safe ladder use with their employees on a regular basis (i.e., during safety tailgate meetings). Select the following link for more information about safe ladder use: [EHS Safety Moment - Choosing and Using Ladders](#).
- Remember to consider potential hazards that may be encountered before using a ladder. Here are some common questions to ask.
 - Am I using the right ladder for the job?
 - Should the ladder be secured to a fixed object to avoid unexpected movement?
 - Is there a more stable work platform that can be used?
 - Can one person perform the work?
- Always stop work immediately and ask for help when a task may be too difficult to perform on your own or could result in injury.

Where to Get Help or More Information:

For more information or assistance, please contact EHS at (949) 824-6200 or at safety@uci.edu.