

Industry Alert—Injury

Rolling safety ladder topples, maintenance worker fractures pelvis

What happened?

A maintenance worker with more than five years experience was repairing a clam loader from the platform of a rolling safety ladder in the equipment shop when the loader's hydraulic lift cylinder struck the side of the ladder and tipped it over. The maintenance worker jumped from the toppling platform at the last second and the right side of his body struck the concrete floor. He suffered a fractured pelvis and a large cut to his right elbow.

Why did it happen?

The clam loader was parked in an awkward position in the equipment shop because the clam of another loader was also in the shop for repair. The rolling safety ladder had to be placed in an unusual position, directly beneath the loader's hydraulic lift cylinder which was supported by an overhead crane. The lift cylinder was slung at the top and the sling was attached to the crane's hook, which wasn't directly above the load. The crane trolley does not have a braking system to hold it in place horizontally. Shortly after the maintenance worker removed the pin from the top of the cylinder, the crane was pulled sideways by the weight of the load until it was directly above it. This movement caused the cylinder to shift downward, striking the railing of the ladder and tipping it.

How can it be prevented?

A worker or a working surface placed directly beneath a suspended load is in a hazardous position, and the hazard increases if there isn't a clear understanding of how the overhead crane might handle the load. All operating features of the overhead crane, including limitations such as the lack of a horizontal braking system, need to be understood and taken into account by the workers involved. Even a slight sideways lift with an overhead crane can have unpredictable consequences when there is no way of horizontally braking the crane trolley.

A factor that contributed to this incident was that another clam was already in the equipment shop for repairs. This prevented the clam loader from being parked in the optimum position for maintenance work, and the rolling safety ladder had to be placed in a more vulnerable position in order for the work to be performed. A standard operating procedure for this and other similar maintenance tasks should be developed that ensures safe positioning of the machine being worked on and of the working platform from which the work is done.

OFSWA Ontario Forestry Safe
Workplace Association

ASTIFO Association pour la sécurité au travail
dans l'industrie forestière de l'Ontario

Although the description of circumstances arises from an actual situation, this Industry Alert does not reflect the final analysis of the situation, nor is it meant to assign blame on the part of any person or member firm. For further information, contact OFSWA at (705) 474-7233.

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