

## Fatal Fall Alert

# Gravity Kills

*In 3 years, 22 Oregon workers died in falls. Risk increases greatly over age 35, and again over age 65. Fall hazards are everywhere. Falls from ladders are #1.*

*Please observe the following safety tips.*

### Recommendations

- **Make sure ladder is in good condition, base and locks are secure. Set base 1/4 working length from wall, supported at top by both rails extending 3-4 ft above dismount level.**
- **Three-point rule: Get a firm grip with three of four limbs, especially in icy conditions.**
- **Beware losing your balance from the unexpected release of a weight you are carrying or pulling, or from overreaching.**



**Much more! See Oregon OSHA's readable manual *FALL PROTECTION FOR THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY* and other resources online at [www.croetweb.com](http://www.croetweb.com)**

- **Avoid standing up from a kneeling position next to a ledge, where momentary dizziness can cause you to lose balance.**
- **Cover and guard holes securely.**

## Fatal Stories, 2003-2005

### LADDERS

**Store ladder** A female retail clerk fell from the sixth step of a step-ladder in a company storeroom, and died 5 days later. She sustained a fracture to the left knee and femur. The clerk was admitted to a local hospital, where she developed sepsis.

**Icy lumber load** A lumber yard worker was killed when he fell about 11 ft off a loaded semi-trailer. The worker placed an extension ladder against the load and climbed to the top to strap it down. Ice had formed on a layer of plastic covering the load, and the worker apparently slipped as he was stepping from the ladder.

**Roof exit** A school custodian died after falling about 12 ft from a ladder. He used a fully extended extension ladder to access a roof to retrieve balls. The spring-loaded locks were not set properly, which allowed the custodian to climb the ladder successfully, but the ladder collapsed when he put his weight on it to return to the ground.

### ELEVATED LEDGE

**Concrete tank** A construction worker died after falling about 19 ft into a concrete tank. The worker was removing concrete from an underground water treatment tank that was being dismantled, and was chipping away the fastening strip from the top edge. He was either bending over or kneeling to perform this task, and apparently lost his balance when he stood up to move to the next section.

**Conveyor belt** A miner fell 12 ft onto a concrete floor from a crossbeam of an elevated conveyor at a sand and gravel operation, and died the next day. The miner and two coworkers were installing a new conveyor belt. The miner was standing on a crossbeam, pulling on a rope tied to the new belt. The rope unexpectedly came loose, causing him to fall.

**Hay trailer** A rancher fell about 12 ft off a trailer onto his head, and died 2 weeks later. The rancher was feeding horses from the top of a trailer when the string broke on a bale of hay he picked up, sending him backward off the trailer. He walked a few hundred yards to his house, and went to the hospital. He was discharged 4 days later, refused physical therapy, and later died of a massive pulmonary embolism.

### HOLE IN ROOF OR FLOOR

**Skylight** A roofer's helper died when he fell through a skylight to a concrete floor 35 ft below. The worker was assisting his father, a roofing contractor, repair water leaks on the flat roof of a commercial warehouse. Clearing up for the day, the worker was backing up with a torch hose when he stepped or tripped into the skylight.

**Insulated hole** A journeyman roofer died after falling through a covered hole 20 ft onto a concrete floor during a warehouse reroofing project. The roofers removed a fan and covered the hole with a square of insulation, unsecured and unmarked. Wearing sunglasses, the roofer walked across the roof, kicked loose the insulation over the hole, and fell through it.

**Loading-hole gate** A female fish processor was killed after falling 12 ft through a loading hole on a second-floor storage area. The opening was designed for use by a forklift: three sides closed by fixed guardrails, and the fourth with a removable gate of two 2x4 rails that sat in cradles. The rails were not pinned or blocked. As the processor leaned over the bottom rail of the gate to catch boxes being thrown up to her, the rail dislodged.

### TRIPS AND OTHER FALLS

**Trip fracture** An 88-year-old pawnbroker tripped over a bag on the floor of his shop and fractured his hip. The victim died from complications in the hospital 4 days later.

**OR**

**-FACE**

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Oregon Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation

503-494-2502 [www.ohsu.edu/croet/face](http://www.ohsu.edu/croet/face)

