
CASE STUDY – LADDER SAFETY – RETAIL

Keywords: Ladders, MMH, Lifting

1. Background

It's Christmas time and is the busiest time of year for this company. Providing excellent customer service tempts even the most seasoned employees in retail to work quickly. While rushing to carry a box down a ladder in the stockroom, one worker fell from the 4th rung. While the employee avoided major injury, this wasn't the first time it has happened at this store.

2. Assessment

While the response to the fall was immediate and the employee received the appropriate first aid, the company did not want this to happen again as they feared it was bad for business and were concerned about the well-being of their employees. In order to prevent this from happening again, the company

- Reviewed their first aid training.
- Underwent a document review of their policies and procedures.
- Reviewed any inspection records and incident reports.
- Completed a risk assessment.
- Spoke to employees about how the stockroom was designed and if there were any issues with stocking and removing boxes.
- Completed an incident investigation.
- Reviewed training records.

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3. Conclusion

The company came to a number of conclusions:

- The result of the incident investigation determined that the box was half full and as the employee was carrying it down the ladder the weight shifted causing them to lose their balance. They were unable to maintain three points of control and as a result they fell.
- The employee shouldn't have been carrying a box while on a ladder although there were no other alternatives.
- Determined that not all employees were trained on ladder safety procedures.
- They did not have the proper inspection process for ladders or incident investigations procedures.
- Confirmed that the first aid responder had the appropriate training and the injured worker.

4. Recommendations

The following recommendations were implemented:

- The company updated their procedures for storing boxes on shelves.
- Instead of using an extending step-ladder they have purchased a mobile ladder stand/mobile ladder platform. They determined that the manufacturer allows handling while using this particular equipment and objects being lifted are not to impair the ability to climb/descend safely and maintain balance and does not block the field of view.
- All employees were trained on manual materials handling and usage of ladders.
- Redesigned the stockroom so frequently accessed items do not need a ladder to get to.
- Sales were analyzed and extra staff were assigned to peak times to prevent rushing.
- Boxes that weighed over 20 kg were separated into two boxes where possible.
- The company trained all employees on identifying hazards.
- The company trained supervisors and managers on incident investigations.

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5. Success Factors and Challenges

The company experienced the following successes:

- Incidents related to ladders and manual materials handling decreased.
- Employees felt less rushed during peak times.
- The redesign of the stockroom made it easier for employees to access stock and they were able to retrieve items faster.

The company experienced the following challenges:

- Lack of buy-in from all parties.
- Difficulty enforcing proper work practices at first, however once employees got used to the new work practice compliance increased.
- There were some complaints about moving the rolling stairs/platform however the company changed the wheels which made it easier to move. The wheels also locked to ensure stability when ascending and descending.

6. Transferability

The company has decided this process is applicable all other locations.

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7. Further information

<https://www.wsps.ca/Shop/Training/Certification-Training-Overview>

<https://www.wsps.ca/Search?searchtext=retail&searchmode=anyword>

For additional information, ask to speak to your local Ergonomist.

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