

Workplace ladder falls a major cause of deaths, injuries, CDC says

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There were 113 ladder-related deaths, more than 34,000 ER-treated injuries in 2011 alone.

(HealthDay)—Workplace tumbles off of ladders are a major cause of injury and death among American employees, a new study says.

"Falls remain a leading cause of unintentional injury [deaths] nationwide, and 43 percent of fatal falls in the last decade have involved a ladder," say a team led by Christina Socias of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Overall, "among workers, approximately 20 percent of fall injuries involve ladders," they added.

In the study, Socias and colleagues analyzed U.S. national data for 2011.

They found that work-related ladder falls caused 113 deaths, almost 15,500 nonfatal injuries that resulted in at least one day away from work, and about 34,000 nonfatal injuries that were treated in hospital emergency departments.

Workers at greatest risk for ladder fall injuries include men, older employees, Hispanics and those in the fields of construction, extraction (such as mining), installation, maintenance and repair.

"Among construction workers, an estimated 81 percent of fall injuries treated in U.S. emergency departments involve a ladder," the researchers noted.

Most of these injuries could have been prevented, however. Socias and her colleagues urge employers, safety experts and [health care professionals](#) to work together to make safe ladder use training available to people both on and off the job.

The authors also called for research into workplace ladder fall prevention, including developing and distributing new technologies to reduce the risk of ladder-related injuries. In the meantime, they said, a few simple steps at the worksite could help prevent ladder falls, including:

- Find ways to complete most of the work needed on the ground, without the use of ladders;
- Provide workers with alternatives to ladders, such as aerial lifts or supported scaffolds;
- Make sure ladders are "thoroughly inspected," have appropriate safety accessories, and are well matched to a worker's weight, task and location;
- Provide on-the-job ladder safety training and information.

The study appears in the April 25 issue of the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, published by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

More information: The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission offers [ladder safety tips](#).

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