



# SAFETY ALERT #34



March 11, 2009

*In the interest of keeping everyone safe CAMSAFETY will be sharing injury information with preliminary root cause analysis. This information is intended to make you think not assess blame. If you have an incident that you would like to share send us the information and we will pass it along.*

## WORKER “FALLS” FROM AN 8 FOOT STEP LADDER

### What Happened

Using a 12' ladder, standing roughly 8' off the ground, a sheet metal worker was screwing sheet metal screws into a return air plenum. The drill was in his right hand and he was reaching across his body to the left, left hand braced against the unit he was working on. He was exerting pressure on the screw to get it in and the counter pressure caused the ladder to tip over to the right. The worker jumped, landing on his feet, and broke his left heel bone. He'll be in a cast for 6-8 weeks.

### Prevention:

There are some options in this case, each with varying degrees of potential effectiveness:

- Use a “baker” or “Perry” scaffold so the worker can more effectively reach multiple areas without having to lean outside of the ladder or scaffold footprint;
- Use a scissor or other type of aerial lift platform;
- Use a shorter ladder which may or may not be more stable;
- Use a retractable lanyard.



For each of these “solutions” it is easy to see how they, in and of themselves, would be a challenge. As an example how do you get a scaffold or aerial lift into the work area, a shorter ladder would most likely be less stable at that work height rather than more stable, and how/where to you tie off the retractable.

In short this situation is a bit of a challenge and requires that the safety professional “think outside the box”. The bottom line is that you now have a lost workday case and, more importantly, an employee with a slow healing and painful injury.

### Applicable Standards

From MIOSHA Part 11 – Fixed and Portable Ladders

**R 408.41122. Use generally.**

Rule 1122. (5) An employee who is on a ladder shall not overreach or do any pushing or pulling that may cause the ladder to move or topple. If both of an employee’s shoulders are outside of a side rail, the employee is overreaching.

Keep in mind that when working on ladders Part 45 – Fall Protection does not usually apply.