SHARP START

March 11 — Ladder on a Rounded Surface

The monitor hose was not inside the confine space while contractors were working inside.

I asked the safety attendant to make sure the monitor hose goes in.

A 20-foot extension ladder was found leaning against a rounded tank surface with no tie-off at the top or bottom. The ladder appeared to have been used briefly and then left in place.

Ladders need stable contact.
Round is not stable.
If it isn't tied off, it isn't secure.

Extension ladders are designed to rest against stable, flat support points. A rounded tank does not provide a secure contact surface. Even slight movement or vibration can cause the ladder to shift laterally. Without tie-off, there is nothing preventing sudden displacement once weight is applied.

A ladder leaning against a curved surface may appear steady while unattended. The instability becomes obvious only after someone climbs it.

This wasn't just a setup issue. It became a secondary hazard when left in place. Another worker could assume it was safe and use it without verifying the support condition.

Ladders don't fail because they're defective. They fail because the surface they rely on isn't secure.

Hazards

- Ladder shift or slide
- Fall from height
- Head or spinal injury
- Fractured wrist or ankle
- Secondary use by unaware worker
- Housekeeping and congestion hazard

Stats

- Falls from ladders remain a leading cause of serious workplace injuries.
- Improper ladder setup and lack of secure tie-off are common contributing factors.
- Many ladder injuries occur during routine access tasks.
- Falls from relatively low elevations can result in severe injury.

Humans at work

The task might've been done, but the job wasn't finished. That's incomplete closure. The ladder got used and then left standing like it was ready for the next guy. That's where assumption takes over. When something is already set up, most people don't question it. They assume it was done right.

That's how risk transfers. One person's shortcut becomes another person's fall. A ladder leaning against a round tank might look steady, but looks don't hold weight. If we don't finish the job by securing it or taking it down, we're not just walking away — we're handing the hazard to someone else.

Pause and Think

- Is there a better option: **Ladders Last**
- Is the support surface flat and stable?
- Is the ladder secured at the top and bottom?
- Would you trust it if someone bumped it?