



March 4 — Ladder Leg Not Locked

Employee was getting ready to climb the ladder and only one of the legs were locked in place. This could have resulted in a fall if the employee was on the ladder.

Stopped the worker from getting on the ladder and got it set up properly.

An employee was preparing to climb a ladder, but only one of the legs was locked into position. The ladder was standing. It looked stable. From a quick glance, nothing seemed obviously wrong.

Until weight is applied.

Extension and step ladders rely on fully engaged locking mechanisms to maintain structural integrity. When only one side is locked, the ladder is no longer balanced under load. The moment body weight shifts, the unlocked leg can collapse or spread, turning a routine climb into a sudden fall.

Falls don't require height to be serious. Most ladder injuries occur from relatively low elevations. What makes them dangerous is how fast control is lost.

This wasn't about not knowing how ladders work. It was about skipping a final check before stepping up.

And gravity doesn't care if you were "just going up for a second."

Hazards

- Sudden ladder collapse
- Loss of balance
- Fall from height
- Head injury
- Broken wrist or ankle
- Back injury from impact

Stats

- Falls are consistently one of the leading causes of workplace fatalities and serious injuries.
- Thousands of ladder-related injuries are treated each year.
- Many ladder injuries occur from heights under 10 feet.
- Improper setup and failure to secure ladder components are common contributing factors.

Humans at Work

This is how things slip past us. It wasn't a big climb. Man, it's just a few feet. And when it feels small, our brain treats it like it's small. We've used ladders a thousand times without an issue, so when one leg isn't fully locked, it doesn't feel urgent. It looks fine. It's standing there.

That's how **normalization** happens. Small misses start to feel acceptable. But the second weight shifts, gravity doesn't care how low it was or how routine it felt.

Pause and Think

- Are both legs fully locked and seated?
- Is the ladder stable under slight pressure before stepping up?
- Would you trust it with your full body weight?

If it isn't locked, it isn't ready.
Stable on the floor doesn't mean
stable underload.
The last check is often the one
that matters most.