

# Safety and health alert

## 18/04 Worker sustains serious injury when portable ladder collapses

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### Incident

In August 2004 a window fixer sustained a serious injury while using a 100mm angle grinder. The window fixer was attempting to cut a limestone feature wall from a perimeter scaffold when he stepped onto a portable aluminium ladder, which moved and collapsed. The worker fell approximately 1.8m to the concrete floor below. While falling the angle grinder was engaged, and when the worker landed the angle grinder came into contact with his forearm.

### Factors

- The portable ladder was not secured at the time of the incident.
- Three points of contact were not maintained while on the ladder.
- The person was carrying a powered angle grinder at the time of the incident.

### Recommendations

1. Extension or single ladders should not be used as a working platform, but as a means of access to or egress from a work area.
2. Check that ladders are secured against displacement (ie slipping or sliding).
3. Ensure the base of the ladder is placed on firm stable ground.
4. The distance between the ladder's base and the supporting structure should be about 1 metre for every 4 metres of working ladder height.
5. Ensure all locking devices on ladders are secured.
6. Materials or tools should not be carried while climbing ladders. Tools should be carried in a tool belt or side pouch.
7. Where light duty work is to be carried out on a ladder, persons must ensure that three points of contact are maintained at all times and that tools can be operated safely in one hand.

### Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the WorkSafe internet site [www.worksafe.wa.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.wa.gov.au), or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email: [safety@docep.wa.gov.au](mailto:safety@docep.wa.gov.au).

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