

Case 193. 47-year-old HVAC technician died when he fell ten to fifteen feet from an extension ladder to the pavement during the preparation activities to wash the air conditioning cooler coils on a store's roof.

A 47-year-old male heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) technician died when he fell ten to fifteen feet from an extension ladder to the pavement during the preparation activities to wash the air conditioning cooler coils on a store's roof. The Werner aluminum extension ladder he was using had a rated capacity of 300 pounds. Although the ladder was identified as 28-foot extension ladder, the 28-foot ladder had a 25-foot working length, and a 21-foot 6-inch step off elevation based upon the manufacturer's recommendations indicated on the label on the ladder. The height from pavement to the top of the wall was 23 feet 6 inches. The decedent was working alone at the time of the incident. The pavement was wet due to a recent rain but it was not raining at the time of the incident. Prior to setting up the ladder, the store's assistant manager spoke with the decedent, who after hooking up one hose to a water spigot inside, went outside to his truck for additional hose. The decedent was approximately one-half way up the ladder when the incident occurred. Possible incident scenarios include, but are not limited to: the ladder started to collapse on itself, the hose became entangled causing the ladder to collapse, or the decedent lost his balance while climbing. Witnesses saw the ladder slide along the wall. When responding police arrived, the ladder was lying flat on the pavement between the decedent and the building. The decedent had struck the back of his head on the pavement. There was a length of green garden hose on the ground approximately 15 to 20 feet from the wall. The hose was identified by the company owner as belonging to his company. It is postulated but not confirmed that the decedent was carrying it while climbing the ladder. The decedent was airlifted to a local hospital where he died the next day.

MIOSHA General Industry Safety and Health Division issued the following alleged Serious citation:

SERIOUS:

PORTABLE LADDERS, PART 4, RULE 447(1).

A straight, sectional or extension, ladder shall be placed so that the side rails have a secure footing. Where the surface is uneven, boards, planks, or leveling jacks may be used to create an even surface. A straight, sectional, or extension ladder shall have safety feet. The ladder shall be placed so as to prevent slipping or it shall be lashed or held in position.

An extension ladder was not adequately fastened or held in position when employee was climbing while carrying hose.