



# Tractor Talks

## Ladder Safety

### Tips for Talking

- **Plan ahead.** Be familiar and comfortable with the topic.
- **Make it relevant.** Include related tasks and work areas or events.
- **Involve your workers.** Ask questions that lead to participation. See suggestions under "Discussion Drivers."

### What went wrong?

**September 28, 8:45 a.m.**

Employed by Quality Source Farms, Inc., 22 year old Leigh McCormick was standing on an 8 foot ladder harvesting oranges. Leaning to his right to reach a cluster of fruit, Leigh felt the ladder shift and then tumbled through branches and onto the dirt beneath the tree. Leigh immediately knew something wasn't right. When Leigh's wife, Louisa, arrived at the hospital she was told that Leigh had several broken ribs and a fractured spine. Six months later, he was finally released from a Nursing and Rehabilitation Center and is now adjusting to life in a wheelchair. Louisa is still learning how to care for her paralyzed husband.

**What went wrong?**

### Ladder Safety

Using a ladder seems pretty basic, however ladders are involved in **thousands** of worker injuries and fatalities each year and farmworkers are too frequently among the victims. To use a ladder safely:

- **Read and follow all labels and markings on the ladder, including weight limits.**
- **Inspect the ladder.** Broken or missing rungs, loose screws, bolts or hinges and damaged side rails are all reasons **NOT** to use the ladder. Damaged ladders must be removed from service and tagged until repaired or discarded.
- **Inspect the ground.** A ladder must be positioned on a stable and level surface, unless it has been secured to prevent movement.
- **Position the ladder.** Remember the 4:1 ratio: for every 4 feet of working height, position the ladder's base 1 foot away from the wall or working surface.
- **Position yourself.** Always maintain a 3-point (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand) contact on the ladder when climbing. Keep your body near the middle of the rung and always face the ladder while climbing.

### Keep an Eye Out for These Hazards:

- Are there overhead power lines?
- Is the ladder damaged?
- Is the ground uneven, unstable, muddy, or slippery?
- Are other activities going on nearby?
- Is this the right ladder for this job?

### Discussion Drivers

1. How could Leigh's accident have been prevented?
2. Think back to a ladder accident that you are familiar with....what went wrong? How could it have been prevented?
3. What idea(s) do you have to make your own ladder use safer—at work and at home?

For more information on Ladder Safety visit: [OSHA.gov](http://OSHA.gov) and NIOSH has a free downloadable Ladder Safety App available for iPhone and Android.

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