

Safety Alert - Ladder Safety

Number 17-12

1 BACKGROUND

Falling from any height can lead to death or long-term injuries. [SafeWork NSW](#) has reported between 2012 and 2015 more than 17,500 workers were injured after falling from a height at NSW workplaces. (Image [SafeWork NSW - Falls](#))

An incident occurred recently at UON when a contractor was climbing down from the stepladder and missed the last step, falling to the ground.

IFS is reviewing the use of ladders by contractors to ensure that they follow University requirements.



2 ACTION REQUIRED

All staff and contractor should review work practices involving working at height and on ladders to reduce the risk of falls. [SafeWork NSW](#) provides information for preventing falls that includes:

1. Work on the ground or on a solid construction where ever possible (may require bringing the work down to the ground)
2. Use a fall prevention device such as a platform ladder with rails, or a scaffold or elevated work platform (EWP)
3. Use a work-positioning or fall arrest system such as rope access or fall arrest harnesses connected to the structure not a ladder

A review of work practices when using ladders should include a review of [SafeWork NSW](#) tips for working safely with ladders. These include:

Work mostly at ground level	
If a ladders is your only option, choose the right one	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choose the right ladder for the job. It should meet Australian standards and the load requirements of the job.• An A-frame or extension ladder may be appropriate for most tasks, but a platform ladder could be safer.• Inspect the ladder for damage before each use.
Consider who is using the ladder and where	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Only use a ladder if you are physically-capable of doing so.• Always set up the ladder on a flat, stable surface. Consider using ladder safety devices like leg levellers, anti-slip gutter guards and stabilisers.
Maintain 3 points of contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This means two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand on the ladder at all times.
Know the basics of ladder safety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Never lean or reach away from the ladder while using it – belt buckle should never be outside the stiles of the ladder.• Only take small items up or down a ladder – never large or heavy items such as building materials. Only carry items that allow you to maintain three points of contact – preferably carry tools on a belt or hoist them up to the job.• The combined weight of the person using the ladder and any items or tools should never exceed the working load limit on the ladder.• A-frame ladders should only be used when locked in the fully-open position.• If you're using an extension ladder, secure it at the top, bottom or both. If this isn't possible then have someone hold the ladder in place while in use.• If you are climbing off the extension ladder, the top should be at least 1 metre above the surface climbing on to.• Extension ladders should be angled at a ratio of 1:4. That is, position the base of the ladder 1 metre away from the structure for every 4 metres of height.• Do not climb or work past the second-last rung of a ladder, and never straddle the top of an A-frame ladder.• When climbing down, remain facing the ladder and climb to the bottom rung before stepping off

SafeWork NSW has produced a [safety video](#) and this includes practical tips that can be easily implemented in the workplace.

3 ASSISTANCE

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact the Health and Safety Team on 49218847 (x18847).