

## Investigation Process

### *What triggers an investigation by the N.C. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Division?*

- A worker's death.
- Hospitalization of an employee, an amputation or the loss of an eye.
- The department may also receive information of a fatality or catastrophe from media reports or referrals from other government agencies.

### *How is the NCDOL OSH Division notified?*

- An employer must notify NCDOL within eight hours of any work-related fatality. In-patient hospitalizations of one or more employees, any work-related amputation, and any work-related loss of an eye must be reported within 24 hours.

### *What will the investigation focus on?*

- The investigation will usually be limited to the events surrounding the accident unless observations at the site indicate a broader investigation is needed.

### *What will happen during the investigation?*

- An OSH investigator will go to the accident site and collect physical evidence, including photographs.
- The investigator will interview employees, witnesses and management officials about the accident to determine its cause.
- Any violations of safety and health standards will be noted and citations will be issued.

### *How long will the investigation take?*

- An investigation can take anywhere from a few weeks to six months, depending on the complexity of the accident.

### *When are investigation results disclosed?*

- Citations and penalties, if issued, can be released to the public on the issuance date.
- Other contents of the file cannot be released until the case is closed or final order on citations is rendered.



Photo: NCDOL/Neal O'Briant

*An employee stands dangerously on top of a stepladder. Ladder manufacturers routinely warn against standing on top of a stepladder.*

## The Investigation

OSH investigators will seek to determine several factors, including whether:

- Ladders were maintained in good condition.
- Ladders were inspected frequently, and those with defects were not used.
- Employees were trained in the hazards associated with ladder use.
- Nonconductive ladders were used near electrical equipment.
- Worker faced the ladder when ascending and descending.
- Ladders were placed at a proper angle of one-fourth the working length of the ladder from the vertical wall.
- The top step was not used on a stepladder.
- Ladders were used only for the purpose intended.
- A safety program, including ladder safety, was developed.

**Standards:** 29 CFR 1910.25–27, Ladders  
29 CFR 1926.1053, Ladders

**Industry Type:** General Industry and Construction

**Accident Type:** Fall from ladder

**Statistical Data:** Falls from elevations were the cause of death in 10 out of the 40 fatalities NCDOL investigated Oct. 1, 2013, through Sept. 30, 2014.



N.C. Department of Labor

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### *What programs does the Department of Labor have in place to prevent falls from ladders?*

**Construction special emphasis program:** Increased training and attention in a dangerous industry.

**Free training:** Workshops, training and consultation in both English and Spanish.

**Publications:** Industry guides that pinpoint fall hazards in general industry and construction.