



# Don't Fall For It!

Digital Media Dramatizes Ladder Safety

## The Challenge

Falls, including those from ladders, are the leading cause of death and the second-most common cause of non-fatal injuries for construction workers. Ladder-related falls account for 16% of all fatal falls and about a fourth of all fall-related injuries. Most of these deaths and injuries are from heights of 10 feet or less.

The medical, wage, and quality-of-life costs of ladder-related deaths and injuries to society are enormous. For the families, friends, and co-workers the personal and emotional costs are immeasurable.

## The Response

CPWR and its union and industry partners knew that it would take more than statistics to capture workers' attention and change attitudes and behavior regarding ladder safety. A multi-stakeholder collaboration was undertaken to develop attention-grabbing training materials that would raise awareness of ladder fall hazards and prevention. Early versions of a DVD and supporting fact sheets were pilot-tested with 35 New Jersey building trades apprentices. Feedback was also provided by more than 300 apprenticeship and training committee members, researchers, insurance company representatives, and safety and health professionals. Based on their input, researchers finalized English- and Spanish-language versions of the materials.



Workers receive training on ladder safety procedures.

## The Results



The 11-minute *Don't Fall For It!* DVD features first-person accounts of workers who have fallen from ladders and emotional testimony from the family of a fatal fall victim. Together, they put a human face on the facts and figures and bring home the consequences of a few moments that can't be changed. Four accompanying fact sheets echo the DVD's step-by-step primer on choosing, inspecting, setting up, and climbing ladders safely.

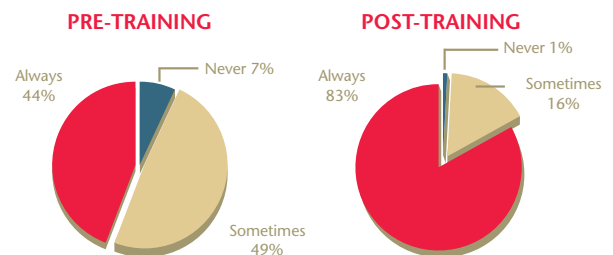
*Don't Fall For It!* features workers using duty rating stickers to identify the safest ladder for a particular job and inspecting a ladder before use. The materials encourage workers to follow a simple checklist for the safe use of ladders, including: keeping the body centered between the rails, using three-point contact when climbing, allowing only one person at a time on a ladder, and never sitting or standing on the top step or "walking" a ladder to adjust its position.

Within a few months of the DVD's release, 450 construction workers had seen the DVD and responded to pre- and post-test questions about their ladder use, knowledge of regulations and safe ladder procedures, and attitudes about ladder safety.

Post-tests showed workers absorbed the *Don't Fall For It!* message and intended to work more safely with ladders. Follow-up telephone surveys conducted three months later found that workers had changed their actual worksite behavior.

Younger workers and those who had fallen in the past reported making the biggest changes in behavior after viewing *Don't Fall For It!*

### INSPECT THE LADDER FOR DAMAGE BEFORE USING IT?



# The CPWR IMPACT

*Don't Fall For It!* has proven to be effective and had a wide reach. By conservative estimates, 50,000 people have viewed *Don't Fall for It!* and are working more safely as a result. More than 5,000 copies of the DVD have been distributed to unions and labor-management training programs, construction companies, OSHA Training Institute programs, insurance companies, federal agencies, state and local public health departments, and others. In addition, *Don't Fall For It!* has reached many underserved workers through the federal Susan Harwood Training Grant program and CPWR's web-based library, eLCOSH ([www.elcosh.org](http://www.elcosh.org)).

- Minnesota OSHA Consultation has shown the DVD to some 1,100 workers and contractors, including hundreds of small residential contractors who employ a high-risk, hard-to-reach population.
- The California State Building and Construction Trades Council used the DVD with more than 100 participants in multi-craft, train-the-trainer classes. Participants were given a copy to use to train thousands of workers.
- Roughly 770 Spanish- and English-speaking workers viewed *Don't Fall For It!* as part of a newly-required OSHA 10-hour training program offered through a University of Nevada-Las Vegas program funded by a Harwood Grant.
- The Massachusetts Department of Health collaborated with the Department of Education to disseminate *Don't Fall For It!* to 51 vocational-technical high schools. The state's Department of Public Health and the Division of Occupational Safety and Health jointly promoted the DVD in a mailing to 384 public works and public utility departments, which resulted in requests from 38 municipalities.



## What made it a success?

*Don't Fall For It!* has become an industry standard for ladder safety training because researchers:

- Worked with stakeholders to develop the DVD's content in English and Spanish.
- Used real-life stories to illustrate the consequences of ladder falls.
- Made it flexible – *Don't Fall For It!* can be shown anywhere – in classrooms or on worksites, on its own or as part of a broader safety curriculum.
- Embedded four printable fact sheets within the DVD that reinforce the message and supply take-home reminders.
- Measured the presentation's effectiveness with surveys administered to workers before and after they watched the DVD.
- Encouraged CPWR staff and partners to present the DVD in numerous industry forums, which led to requests for copies, wide distribution, and references in other fall-related intervention research. Marketing efforts, including social media, are on-going.

