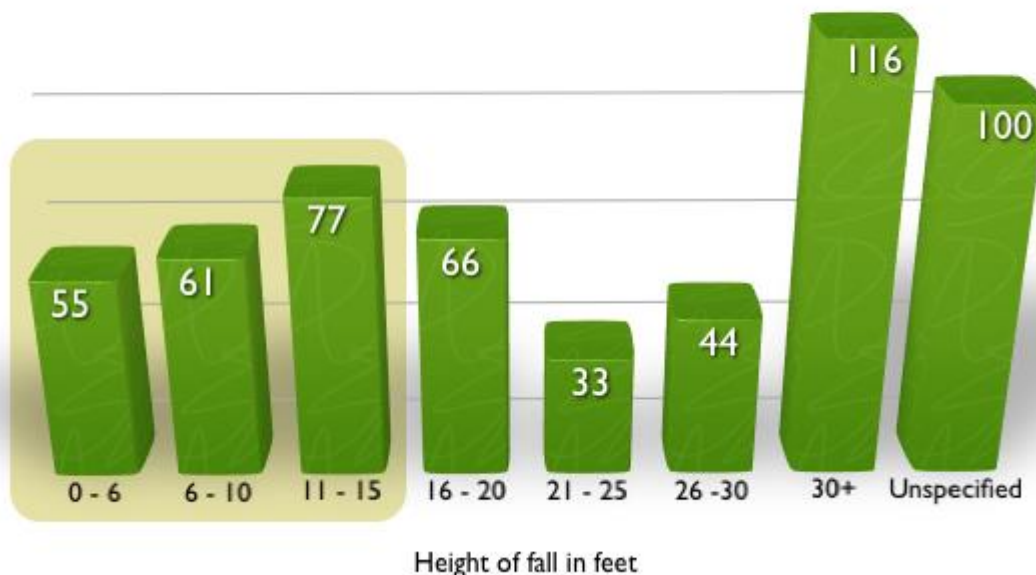


At what height do most ladder injuries occur?

Common sense leads us to the conclusion that a shorter ladder carries less risk of injury than a taller one, and to an extent, this is probably true. Someone can, however, sustain serious injury from even a short fall. A 2011 estimate from the Occupation Injury and Illness Classification System (OIICS) claims that 35% of fall fatalities [PDF] were from heights of 15 feet or less.

Fatal falls to lower level by height of fall, 2011

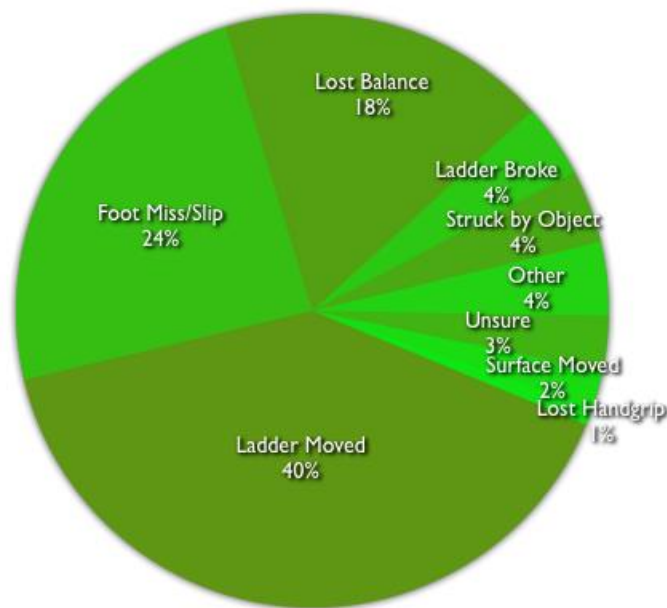
Source: <http://www.bls.gov/iif/oshwc/cfoi/cfch0010.pdf>



On the other hand, there have been cases of individuals who have surprisingly survived falls from much greater heights. Vesna Vulovic, a Serbian flight attendant, survived a 33,330 ft fall from a plane in 1972. The point is, focusing on the height of a ladder to determine whether or not it's safe ignores other very important and potentially life-saving factors.

Ladder injuries aren't caused by the height of the ladder, they're caused because people aren't using them properly.

For example, if you need to reach a high place, it's much safer to use a tall, appropriately sized ladder that allows you to maintain good balance than to use a short ladder. Additionally, if you're resting your ladder too close to a building, your risk of falling is greater. The Extension Ladder Fast Fact Sheet from the United States Office of Compliance has a very helpful graph showing the proper distance a ladder should be from a structure.



Once you've selected an appropriately tall ladder and set it up with the correct pitch, there are still plenty of ways for you to injure yourself. Consider the data presented to the right:

- 40% of ladder falls resulted from the ladder itself moving. The large majority of these cases involve the bottom of the ladder moving. You'll recognize that this kind of movement can happen no matter how high up you are.
- 24% were attributed to slips on the steps of the ladder. Inspecting the steps to make sure they are free of any slippery material and wearing appropriate footwear along with choosing ladders with anti-slip surfaces on the steps can help mitigate this risk.
- Losing one's balance accounted for another 18% of ladder falls which should be less likely to occur if the ladder itself is stable.

More Ladder Injury Statistics

A Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) report on ladder safety showed some startling statistics concerning the frequency and severity of ladder-related accidents in the United States. Every year thousands of people are injured and hundreds are killed. By understanding the causes of ladder accidents the vast majority could be prevented.

- More than **90,000 people receive emergency room treatment** from ladder-related injuries every year
- Elevated falls account for almost **700 occupational deaths** annually
- These deaths account for 15% of all occupational deaths
- OSHA believes 100% of all ladder accidents could be prevented if proper attention to equipment and climber training were provided
- Over the last 10 years the amount of ladder-related injuries has increased 50%
- According the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 50% of all ladder-related **accidents were due to individuals carrying items as they climbed**
- The most common type of ladder-related injury, with 32%, is fractures