



Take Steps TO PREVENT A FALL



Health
Northern Sydney
Local Health District

Simple Home Maintenance—at your own Risk!
Real people tell their true stories!

Robert's Story



WHAT HAPPENED?

About 7 years ago I was preparing to do some painting on my roof, as well as inspecting my guttering and doing a few other jobs.

I'd been up and down my ladder on several occasions and I was sure that I had secured [the ladder], or made certain that the bottom of the ladder was nice and level.

However, on attempting to come down and step around the top step of the ladder I felt the ladder go and the next thing I woke up and found an Ambulance man leaning over me.

Unfortunately, the ladder had gone. In fact, it had saved my life because it landed on some steps and I landed on the ladder.

INJURIES?

Two ambulances arrived 7 minutes after my wife had called and I was taken to hospital. That was on a Saturday afternoon and I stayed there on the Saturday and Sunday. I was X-rayed and it was determined that I had a number

of breaks in my upper left arm. My left elbow was [also] damaged, as well as a fracture to my pelvis and hip on my right side.

I was operated on the Monday. I had my upper arm replaced with a prosthesis, which is about 200mm long. I [also] have a plate and seven screws in my elbow. Fortunately, I my pelvis and hip on my right side didn't need any attention, just observation.

I was in the hospital for 2 ½ weeks and then transferred to the [rehabilitation] Hospital. I was there for 3 ½ weeks with constant supervision.

Fortunately, one of the rules they had was that you had to get to the meal table by yourself after the first day. So there was a lot of incentive to get up out of your bed and go and have meals.

After the 3 ½ weeks I came home and then spent the next couple of months recuperating.

ONGOING IMPACT

I don't climb ladders anymore and I give a lot of advice to my friends about securing a ladder at the top.

Unfortunately, I was a keen tennis player and I used to play in a businessman's comp twice a week and I played social tennis on Sundays.

Because I have *permanent tendon damage* in my left arm I cannot raise it above [shoulder] height, I can't do a ball toss anymore. So I

unfortunately *gave up* tennis. The work I used to do around the garden has also been reduced because, I again, I can't hold any pruning tools successfully. I just can't do anything more with my left arm.

Apart from that I lead a normal life. I'm please to say that I have had wonderful support from my family and friends that help me get through all these problems.

But my advice to anybody is if you are putting a ladder up, make sure it is secured.

Chris' Story



WHAT HAPPENED?

I'm actually amazed that I do have a falls story. I have always considered myself really fit and I thought falls were something that happened to everybody else.

I was just finishing off painting a room at home and I just noticed I missed one little bit. We had actually started to bring the furniture back in, and I thought "Oh, I'll just quickly climb up the ladder and just paint that tiny little bit."
(continued over . . .)

So I flew up the ladder, and I can remember it crossing my mind that “that isn’t the really the safest place to put that ladder and I didn’t check that the chain had attached to the back of the ladder’ – it was an absolutely ancient one [ladder].

I quickly grabbed the paint tin and went up. I just got up there and the ladder collapsed underneath me.

I fell with the paint actually streaming everywhere all over my leather lounge suite, and the ladder fell on top of my leg and my finger got caught in the top of

the ladder. Luckily my husband was home and he came in after I screamed - there was paint and blood everywhere.

INJURIES?

I cleaned myself up the best I could and we went up to the hospital. I was so lucky I only had a couple of stitches in my leg, but I had to have *hand surgery* which took 3 days in hospital and a week off work.

ONGOING IMPACT

Luckily I haven’t had any ongoing ramifications. My leg is still quite bruised, but my finger has got full mobility.

The problem with the ladder was

that it was ancient and I didn’t actually attach it properly. So we immediately threw out the ladder.



Chris with her new, safer, ladder

Les' Story



I’m 77 years old and I enjoy doing maintenance around the house.

WHAT HAPPENED?

About 4 years ago I was painting the woodwork and finials on the roof of the house. I borrowed an extension ladder and had it extended out doing various parts of the roof.

I climbed the ladder and I had a brand-new tin of paint. As I was about to step off the ladder and onto the roof, I felt the ladder move slightly, and I thought, “oh what can I do with this tin of paint.” There was no-where I

could put it down without spilling the paint.

The ladder seemed to slip more so I then just laid myself down straight onto the roof. I still felt myself sliding and bearing in mind a friend of mine had a serious fall off the roof about 2 years earlier, I was concerned about stopping myself from sliding.

I grabbed hold of the guttering to slow my slide down. I kept on going and the ladder went onto the ground. Hanging onto the gutter, I was able to slow my fall down and the guttering actually went from a U shape to a flat shape, with me hanging onto it. I fell probably only about a metre free-fall.

INJURIES?

I was very lucky. I had the paint all over the path next to me but I had a very sore leg just below the knee. It was aching considerably – I could bend it and could stand on it. But I was in severe pain.

I didn’t think it was necessary to call the ambulance, but about 4 hours later my wife and I thought we

should go to the hospital. They X-rayed it and the duty doctor said I had only bruising and couldn’t see any damage anywhere, but I went [referred] to a specialist the following Wednesday.

The specialist took 1 quick look at the X-Ray and said I had a little crack on the top of my left leg – apart from that everything’s OK. [He said] I would be on crutches for about 3 months and then a couple of months of physio.

There was no need for operating, but he said [I] may have some trouble down the track with bone fragments that might be in the joint.

ONGOING IMPACT

So far I have had no trouble and I still carry on doing maintenance around the house. But when I get around to climbing up on ladders now I make sure there is somebody there to steady the ladder or just in case it does move.

But my movements haven’t been restricted otherwise.