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# Worker fatally injured in fall from an extension ladder

June 7, 2021

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## **The contents of this report**

This document reports the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) investigation of a fatal incident that occurred in June 2021. It begins with a short summary of what happened. The rest of the report covers this same information in greater detail.

## **Incident summary**

An Arborist climbed to the top of an extension ladder, fell and sustained fatal injuries.

## **Background information**

### **Worker**

The deceased worker was an Arborist who was self-employed. They worked in and around the community of Strathmore and had their own workshop.

The Arborist would offer their services, free of charge, in exchange for the materials cut (example: tree trunk, branches, twigs, etc.) for their own use.

The Arborist would make arrangements and determine the scope of work. The Arborist would bring their own tools and equipment, such as ropes, fall protection equipment, and saws to the work site to complete the task. In the event that additional equipment was required, the Arborist would rent the equipment and dispense the cost to the homeowner.

The Arborist had many years of experience falling trees in the industry along with use of chainsaws and fall protection equipment.

### **Homeowner**

The owner of the property was the homeowner of the residence. The Homeowner hired the Arborist by verbal agreement, to help remove some tree limbs, trunks, and branches in order to prevent damage to the home during adverse weather conditions.

## Work site, equipment and materials

### Work site

The incident occurred at a residential home in Strathmore, Alberta.

### Extension ladder

A Falcon AE 300-32 extension ladder 33 foot (10.06 metres (m)) was involved in the incident (Figure 1). The Arborist fell while climbing the ladder to the top of the tree to secure the ladder.

The extension ladder was a rental, from a rental store in Strathmore.



*Figure 1. Extension ladder post-incident. The extension ladder was moved and packed-up by the Homeowner and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) prior to OHS arrival.*

*A. Ropes to secure the extension ladder at the bottom/base and top*

*B. Extension ladder used by Arborist when incident occurred*

### Saws

A Stihl, Model MS 271, Class 1A portable gas-operated chainsaw and an unmarked bow saw were present at the time of the incident.

### Fall protection equipment

A Miller, by Honeywell, full body harness, interlocking brackets, and 6 foot (1.828 m) lanyard with shock absorber were present and worn by the Arborist at the time of the incident.

## Ropes

One rope was used to secure the base of the ladder to the house stair rails (Figure 2).

In addition, the Arborist had a second rope tied to the other end of the extension ladder so the Arborist could secure the ladder near the top of the tree.

## Sequence of events

On June 7, 2021, at approximately 8:30 a.m., the Arborist set up the extension ladder to access the tree.

The Arborist secured two portions of the tree trunk with chains to ensure they were supported and secured when the Arborist cut down the limbs, trunks, and branches from the tree (Figure 2).

The Arborist donned the Miller fall protection harness prior to climbing the extension ladder.

The Arborist secured the base of the ladder to the stair railings (Figure 2).

Once the extension ladder was secured to the stair railings, the Arborist requested that the Homeowner hold the extension ladder, at the base, as the Arborist ascended to the top.

The Arborist then proceeded to climb the extension ladder.



*Figure 2. Incident location*

*A. Chains used to secure tree/trunk load*

*B. Location where the extension ladder was set-up by Arborist*

*C. Arborist tied the base of the ladder to the stairs' railings*

The Arborist climbed towards the top of the tree in order to secure the ladder and their fall protection harness to the tree. Sometime during the climb, the Arborist fell. During the ordeal, the Homeowner tried to grab the falling Arborist and was subsequently, knocked to the ground. The Arborist landed on their back and head on the side of the street near the curb.

The Homeowner called 9-1-1.

The Arborist was transported by emergency medical services, to Strathmore District Health Services where the worker succumbed to their injuries.

## **Completion**

A review for enforcement action was completed on January 19, 2022, and it was determined that prosecution or an administrative penalty were not appropriate based on the circumstances surrounding this incident.

This investigation was completed on February 22, 2022.

**Signatures:**

ORIGINAL REPORT SIGNED

Lead Investigator

February 22, 2022

Date

ORIGINAL REPORT SIGNED

Manager

February 22, 2022

Date