Aluminum ladder contributes to electrocution death

A maintenance worker with no electrical training was electrocuted while doing renovation work in a 10-story office tower. The victim was standing on an aluminum ladder removing ceiling tiles when both hands made contact with a 120-volt electrical wire that was hanging from the ceiling. A co-worker pushed the victim off the ladder – risking electrocution himself – and a supervisor called 911 and administered CPR, although it had been eight or nine years since he last took CPR training.

After the incident, co-workers provided investigators with only limited information. They said the man had been attempting to cut the wire hanging from the ceiling. However, no wire cutters or scissors were found.

All five laborers were working in a room that was cluttered with broken ceiling tiles and metal support pieces. They were not provided with personal protection equipment and signs warning of an electrical hazard were not posted.

Make sure your workers do not attempt work for which they are not trained. In this instance, the victim was not qualified to work with electricity and was unable to identify hazards that an experienced electrician would – such as working with an aluminum ladder rather than a wooden one.