Man Falls Through Window

A window mechanic died from generalized trauma when he fell through a window he was trying to replace on the 21st floor of an office building.

To replace the window, the victim had to loosen and remove bolts in the frame. He was standing on a three-foot-high (.9 meter) stepladder in front of the window. The bolt above his right shoulder was stuck, so he was striking it with a hammer. He missed, and struck the windowpane. It shattered, and the victim and the ladder fell sideways through the opening to a brick courtyard 250 feet (76.2 meters) below.

Two steps could have prevented this fatality. First, fall protection options should always be considered when there is a potential for serious falls. The windows of the type involved in the incident are designed with the strength and integrity to prevent someone from falling through them. When they are damaged, they should be approached with caution.

Secondly, the work being performed by the victim at the time of the incident could just as easily have been accomplished with the ladder and the worker positioned by an adjacent, undamaged side window instead of directly in front of the damaged unit. Had this been done, the incident might have been prevented.