Spot The Safety Violation: Fright of Stairs

Can you think of a safer way to get this job done’

Yes, doing work on or near a stairway can be very challenging, especially if the work is at heights. But precariously balancing ladders on steps and platforms created by saw horses isn’t a particularly safe approach.

The workers in this picture from WorkSafe Victoria had other

options available to them. For example, they could've properly built a scaffold. In addition, they could've worked from a boom
or scissor lift.

To protect your workers from falling off ladders, make sure they:

- Place ladders on solid, level ground'not on stairways
- Don't position ladders near an edge or floor opening that would significantly increase the potential fall distance
- Face the treads when going up and down the ladder and stay in the centre of the side rails
- Maintain three points of contact with the ladder at all times
- Avoid leaning to one side or overreaching
- Carry tools in a tool belt or raise and lower them with a hand line
- Wear shoes/boots with clean, slip-free soles
- Don't place a step ladder on boxes or scaffolds to gain extra height
- Take extra care when positioning a ladder in corridors or driveways where it could be hit by a person or vehicle
- Don't move a ladder while someone is on it
- Wear fall protection when required by the OHS regulations.

In addition, here are 10 basic scaffolding safety tips:

1. Scaffold erection and dismantling must be done or supervised by qualified workers. And all scaffolds must be inspected before use by a competent person as well as those who
   will use them, regardless of who erected them.
2. Damaged or weakened scaffolds shouldn't be used until they've been effectively repaired.

3. The vertical supports of scaffolds must be placed on a firm base or sill.
4. The scaffold must be capable of supporting at least four times the load that will imposed on it, including workers, tools and materials.
5. Scaffolds should have toe boards to prevent tools and materials from falling off them.
6. The scaffold supports must be properly braced.
7. Don’t use pallets, boxes, concrete blocks, bricks or other unstable materials to support scaffolds.
8. The wheels of rolling scaffolds must have locking devices or blocks to prevent movement.
9. Scaffolds should have guardrails if workers are at risk of falling three metres or more or workers using the scaffold must wear appropriate fall protection.
10. Keep scaffolds’especially those made of metal’away from power lines.

And here are five tips for safe use of scissor lifts:

1. Worksite inspection. Because scissor lifts should be operated only on flat, level surfaces, inspect the worksite to ensure there are no uneven surfaces, drop offs or holes, bumps, floor obstructions or debris. Also, check for overhead hazards or other work/workers in the area where the lift will be operated.
2. Pre-shift inspection. Before workers use a scissor lift, they should visually check the platform floor, guardrails and toe boards, and ensure the tires and wheels are in good shape. They should also check that the controls are clearly marked for function and the hydraulics aren’t leaking.
3. Function test. Workers should test the ground controls, manual lowering control and platform controls, including emergency stops, to ensure the equipment is functioning properly. And they should check steering and drive functions.

4. PPE. Workers on a scissor lift should wear appropriate fall protection, such as a harness and fall arrest lanyard, as required by the OHS regulations or recommended by the operator’s manual. They should also wear any other PPE required or recommended. For example, where overhead obstructions are present, they should wear hard hats.
5. Training. All workers who must operate a scissor lift should be trained so that they’re competent to do so. That is, they must receive adequate instruction and demonstrate competency in operating the equipment.