

USING LADDERS

SAFETY TOOL BOX TALK

A ladder is an essential workplace tool for anyone working above ground level. However, each year more than half a million people are injured while using ladders. Anyone who uses the wrong ladder for a job or uses it inappropriately is courting trouble. Don't become a statistic. Remember these ladder safety tips:

Select the correct ladder. Why waver on the top rung of a stepladder when you can use an extension ladder? Never use a metal ladder if there's any chance of contacting electricity.

Never assume a ladder is safe. Check it for unsafe footing, broken steps, bent legs, bent supports, cracks, worn or slippery step treads, and worn or missing rubber feet. Don't use it if there's a problem.

Set the ladder up on flooring that is dry, even and clear of obstacles. Never lean the ladder against anything unstable (such as a stack of boxes) or place it in front of an unguarded or unlocked door.

Follow the belt buckle rule when using a stepladder, making sure your belt buckle goes no higher than the top step of the ladder. Climb the ladder only after ensuring the frame is locked securely in place.

Follow the four-to-one rule when setting up an extension ladder. Place the ladder with its base one foot away from the wall for every four feet in height. Secure the ladder to a stable object at the top and then lock the extension securely in place. Never stand on the top two steps of an extension ladder.

Ask a spotter to hold the base of the ladder while you climb and be especially careful when climbing a ladder on a windy day. Remember to fasten the top of the ladder securely to prevent it from tipping.

Ascend and descend the ladder facing the rungs with both hands on the edges. Hoist tools and materials only after you have reached the top of the ladder.

Take precautions to prevent a fall. Use both hands when climbing and use the 3 point rule: always have 3 points touching the ladder at all times, 2 feet one hand or 2 hands one foot. Never climb onto a ladder that's already supporting one person.

LADDER SAFETY

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INSPECT IT

Before using, inspect for faults, such as broken rungs or rails. If it is an extension ladder, inspect the pulleys, ropes and locks for excessive wear. Also, check the footings and pads to make sure they still provide a non-skid surface. If a defect is found, the ladder should be tagged unsafe and taken out of service. If it cannot be fixed, make sure it is disposed of properly.

SET IT UP ON SOLID FOOTING

When setting up a ladder, make sure the ground it is set upon is level and stable. Do not set the ladder on a muddy surface, which may cause it to slip. Do not use bricks or other material to raise the height of the ladder, which will also make it unstable. If the working surface is not level, use an extension ladder that has adjustable feet attached to each leg to make up for the difference.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

The ladder should reach a minimum of three feet above the point of support and should be secured at this point. If it is not tall enough for this, you are using the wrong ladder.

USE THE 4:1 RULE

When using extension ladders, abide by the 4:1 rule. This means if you are using a 12-foot ladder, the base should be 3-feet from the structure. Some ladders provide a picture guide on the ladder itself to help you with this ratio. When using a stepladder, make sure the folding cross braces are fully folded out and locked into place before you step onto it.

USE THE LADDER CORRECTLY

Always face the ladder when ascending or descending, and have both hands free to grasp it securely. If you need tools, they should be carried in a tool belt or pulled up with a rope once you have reached your destination. Don't use a folded stepladder as a straight ladder.

3-POINT RULE

Remember to use the 3-Point Rule when climbing a ladder. At least two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand, should be in contact with the ladder at all times.

STAY CENTERED

Keep your body between the vertical side rails of the ladder. This reduces the chance of tipping over the ladder, or even worse falling off of it.

DON'T OVER CLIMB THE LADDER

Do not climb higher than the third rung from the top on straight or extension ladders, or higher than the second tread from the top on stepladders.

By following the above rules, you greatly reduce your chances of being injured while working on ladders. They are a valuable - but potentially unstable - piece of equipment. Take care and be safe!

LADDER SAFETY RULES

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Gravity never forgets. As soon as you set foot on the ladder's first rung and pull your body off the ground, gravity works to bring you back to earth. Therefore, it's no surprise that ladder safety begins from the ground up.

FOLLOW THE RULES

Ladder safety may seem simple, but injuries occur every year. Below are some ladder safety dos and don'ts:

- Use the right ladder for the job.
- Ensure a firm foundation.
- Open a step ladder fully.
- Inspect the ladder before and after a job.
- Read all warning labels carefully and follow directions before you climb.
- Clean the ladder after each use to prevent dirt buildup.
- Wear clean, dry, slip-resistant shoes and use ladders with slip resistant feet.
- Don't stand any higher than the third rung from the top of the ladder.
- Don't lean too far or overreach. Reposition the ladder closer to the work instead.
- Don't use a ladder as a bridge or scaffold.
- Don't put a ladder on a box, barrel or other object to gain additional height.
- Don't use a damaged or unsafe ladder.

Remember, don't let gravity get you down. Practice ladder safety rules every time you climb to make your work easier, faster and safer.

