

LOSS CONTROL TOOL CHEST

Ladder Safety

There are an estimated 24,882 injuries and as many as 36 fatalities per year due to falls from stairways and ladders. Close to half of these injuries are serious enough to require time off the job. There are requirements for the safe use of ladders that could have prevented many of these injuries.

Employers have responsibilities to create a work environment in such a way that there will not be an adverse effect on the health and safety of their employees (Cal OSHA –Title 8~3203). As far as ladders in particular are concerned, the following Rules of Ladder Safety should be considered:

◦ **SELECT THE RIGHT LADDER FOR THE JOB**

There are many ladders available, each for a specific purpose. In addition, they may be made of wood, aluminum, or fiberglass and designed for light work to industrial work. Regardless of the type, be sure the ladder has a label certifying it complies with the specifications of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and that it is listed by Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Inspect ladders according to manufacture guidelines.

◦ **INSPECT THE LADDER BEFORE USE**

Each time you use a ladder inspect for loose or damaged rungs, steps and rails. Also check for loose hardware. Make sure the spreaders on the ladder can be locked in place. Never use a ladder with a defect. Follow manufacture guidelines for other items that may need to be inspected on your particular ladder.

◦ **SET UP THE LADDER WITH CARE**

- ✓ When setting up a ladder, make sure the ground it is set upon is level and stable
- ✓ Do not set the ladder up on a muddy surface or you may find yourself falling over
- ✓ Do not use bricks or other material to raise the height of the ladder
 - If it is not tall enough, you are using the wrong ladder
- ✓ The ladder should reach a minimum of three feet above the “point of support” and should be secured at this point
- ✓ When using extension ladders, abide by the 1:4 rule (Base :working height rule)
 - This means if you are using a ladder on a 12 foot high wall, the base should be three feet from the structure
 - Some ladders provide a picture guide on the ladder itself to assist you in this

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- ✓ When using a step ladder, make sure the folding cross braces are locked in the proper position before you step into it
- ✓ 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
- ✓ Remember the "3-Point Rule": At least two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand, should be in contact with the ladder at all times
- ✓ Keep your body between the side rails of the ladder - this reduces the chances of tipping over and/or falling off
- ✓ Don't climb higher than the third rung from the top on straight or extension ladders or the second rung down from the top plate on stepladders
- ✓ If you must set up a ladder in a traffic area, use a barricade or guard to prevent collisions - lock or block any nearby door that opens toward you

One more thing: Training - Employers must provide appropriate training for each employee using ladders. Training must be provided by a competent person.