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LADDER SAFETY

Every year, there are numerous work-related injuries or accidents that involve ladders. Accidents often occur if ladders are not set up properly, are not maintained, or are used incorrectly.

Employees who work with ladders should be familiar with the rules for safe ladder set-up and use. In addition, they need to know how to select the right ladder for a job as well as how to inspect it. Proper care and maintenance can prevent employees from using a ladder that may not be safe. Remember, neglected or abused ladders can, and do, become dangerous ladders. If, during an inspection, an employee discovers that a ladder is unsafe, he/she should instantly remove it from service. The use of ladders with broken or missing rungs, broken steps, split side rails, or other faulty or defective construction should be prohibited at all times.

Keep the following points in mind when using a ladder and during inspection:

- Make sure that the appropriate type and size ladder for a job (including correct fittings and safety feet) is used
- Examine the ladder to confirm that it is free from burrs and sharp edges
- Confirm that the ladder has no structural damage and look for cracks – aluminum ladders should not be bent or dented (See manufacture information for inspection guidelines)
- Since step ladders are equipped with spreaders or other locking devices, confirm that these devices are in working order; and make sure that they are not wobbly (a possible indication of side strain) and that the hinges are firm and straight

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- Confirm that support braces and other hardware are not damaged and that all screws and bolts are tight
- Make sure that steps and rungs are not damaged and firmly attached in place
- Make sure that the ladder is free of oil, grease, and other slip hazards
- Short ladders should not be spliced together to provide a long section
- All portable ladders should be equipped with non-slip bases
- Wood ladders must remain unpainted
- When inspecting metal ladders, check for corrosion of interiors of open-end hollow rungs

Keep the following points in mind regarding ladder placement:

- When using extension ladders, use the four-to-one ratio (4:1) – place the ladder so that its feet are one foot away from whatever it is leaning against for every four feet in working height, not the length of the ladder
- Never use a ladder in a horizontal position as a walk-plank or scaffold
- Never place a ladder in front of a door that opens toward the ladder unless the door is locked, blocked, or guarded
- Place ladders so that both side rails have secure footing, and provide solid footing on soft ground to prevent the ladder from sinking
- Never lean the ladder against unsafe objects (boxes, drums, or barrels)
- When ladders are used to access high places, they must be securely lashed to prevent slipping
- Extend the side rails of extension ladders three feet above the top landing

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- Ladders must not be placed in passageways, doorways, driveways, or any other location where they may be displaced by activities being conducted on any other work unless protected by barricades or guards
- Never use metal ladders around electrical circuits or power lines
- Prevent ladder damage during transport
- Straight ladders should be stored flat or on wall brackets to prevent sagging or warping, and step ladders should be stored upright and in the closed position

Some final reminders...use caution when ascending or descending ladders. It is important to hold the side rails with both hands when ascending or descending a ladder. If material must be handled, raise or lower it with a rope. Always face the ladder when ascending or descending. Never slide down any ladder. Be sure that shoes are free of wet paint, grease, or mud before climbing the ladder. Never climb higher than the third rung from the top on straight or extension ladders or the second rung down from the top plate of a step ladder. Never try to increase the height of a ladder by standing it on other objects, such as, boxes or barrels, or by splicing two ladders together. Portable ladders should be tied, blocked, or otherwise secured against movement. Ladders should never be used sideways as platforms, runways, or scaffolds. Remember, the selection of the appropriate ladder can help prevent accidents because it is the right step.