

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 the job and how to inspect the ladder. 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, the ladder should be removed 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.

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

- Make sure that the appropriate type and size ladder for the 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)
- Confirm that step ladders spreaders or other locking 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
- 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
- Make sure short ladders are not spliced together to make a long ladder
- Make sure portable ladders are equipped with non-slip bases
- Check that wood ladders are not painted, which can be slippery and hide defects
- Check for corrosion of interiors of open-end hollow rungs when inspecting metal ladders

Keep the following points in mind regarding ladder placement:

- Use the four-to-one ratio (4:1) when setting a straight ladder. Place the ladder so that its base is one foot away from whatever it is leaning against for every four feet in working height, not ladder length
- Never use a ladder in a horizontal position as a walking-plank or scaffold
- 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)
- Securely lash straight ladders in place to prevent slipping
- Extend the side rails of extension ladders three feet above the top landing
- Never place a ladder in passageways, doorways, driveways, or any other location where they may be displaced by activities being conducted, unless protected by barricades or guards
- Never use metal ladders around electrical circuits or power lines
- Prevent ladder damage during transport
- Store straight ladders 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. Remember, the selection of the appropriate ladder can help prevent accidents because it is the right step.