Ladders – Make Ladder Safety a High Priority Meeting Kit



What's At Stake

Ladder safety begins with selecting the right ladder for the job and includes inspection, setup, proper climbing or standing, proper use, care, and storage. This combination of safe equipment and its safe use can eliminate most ladder accidents.

What's the Danger

LADDER ACCIDENTS – 4 MAIN TYPES

Ladder accidents can come from a wide variety of issues but the following four causes account for the vast majority.

1. **Selecting the Wrong Type of Ladder.** Like choosing the right tool can make all the difference when it comes to safety and this is the same for ladders. One thing to consider when selecting an appropriate ladder is the ladder's weight capacity. Each ladder is designed to support a maximum weight limit and if the climber exceeds that limit the ladder could break and cause the user to fall or become injured.

Many injuries occur due to ladders being too short for a specific task, and instead of selecting a new ladder for the job, workers will place the ladder on something to extend its reach or will stand on the top rung to gain the necessary height. Both scenarios are extremely dangerous and can result in serious injuries.

1. **Using Worn or Damaged Ladders.** Another common contributing factor to ladder accidents is the use of old, worn, or damaged ladders. Like everything else, ladders have a shelf life; after a couple of years the stress of being climbed up and down on causes ladders to break down. Damaged ladders are extremely dangerous as they can easily break while being used and cause serious injuries.
2. **Incorrect Use of Ladders.** Human error is by far the leading cause of ladder accidents. Never use a ladder in any other way than what the manufacturer intended it to be used for. Also, do not lengthen or alter a ladder in any way. While using a ladder always maintain 3 points of contact with the ladder to ensure stability. Also, never attempt to reach for something while on the ladder. It is much safer to get off the ladder, move it, and then climb back up.
3. **Incorrect Placement of Ladders.** Make sure that when positioning a ladder, the ground you place it on is level and firm. Ladders should never be placed in front of a door that is not locked, blocked, or guarded.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

BEST LADDER SAFETY PRACTICES

- Inspect the ladder for damage before use. Look for corrosion, cracks, splits, and bent edges.
- Remove damaged ladders from service and tagging them as damaged.
- Extend the ladder three feet above the landing—the three-foot rule).
- Move the base out at least one foot for every four feet of ladder height—The 4-to-1 ladder safety rule.
- Secure the ladder in accordance with Cal/OSHA regulations.
- Make sure all locks on extension ladders are engaged to prevent a sudden retraction.
- When moving a ladder, retracting it all the way and when possible having two people move it.
- In order to maintain three points of contact on a ladder, never carry anything while climbing. Workers are encouraged to use a tool belt for small tools and a rope system for larger tools and other materials.
- Read and follow all labels/markings on the ladder.
- Avoid electrical hazards. Look for overhead power lines before handling a ladder. Avoid using a metal ladder near power lines or exposed energized electrical equipment.
- Always inspect the ladder prior to using it. If the ladder is damaged, remove it from service and tag it until repaired or discarded.
- Always maintain a three-point (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand) contact on the ladder when climbing. Keep your body near the middle of the step, and always face the ladder while climbing.
- Only use ladders and appropriate accessories (ladder levelers, jacks or hooks) for their designed purposes.
- Ladders must be free of any slippery material on the rungs, steps, or feet.
- Do not use a self-supporting ladder (e.g., step ladder) as a single ladder or in a partially closed position.
    - Do not use the top step/rung of a ladder as a step/rung unless it was designed for that purpose.
    - Use a ladder only on a stable and level surface, unless it has been secured (top or bottom) to prevent displacement.
    - Do not place a ladder on boxes, barrels, or other unstable bases to obtain additional height.
    - Do not move or shift a ladder while a person or equipment is on the ladder.
    - An extension or straight ladder used to access an elevated surface must extend at least three feet above the point of support. Do not stand on the three top rungs of a straight, single, or extension ladder.
    - The proper angle for setting up a ladder is to place its base a quarter of the working length of the ladder from the wall or other vertical surface.
    - A ladder placed in any location where it can be displaced by other work activities must be secured to prevent displacement or erect a barricade to keep traffic away from the ladder.
    - Be sure that all locks on an extension ladder are properly engaged.
    - Do not exceed the maximum load rating of a ladder. Be aware of the ladder’s load rating and of the weight it is supporting, including the weight of any tools or equipment.
    - Only use ladders for their designed purpose.
    - Make sure you’re using the right type of ladder for the job.
    - Rethink your plans if you’re dizzy or fatigued.
    - Make sure that your shoes are clean of any substances which could cause you to slip.
    - Protect your ladder at the base to prevent people or objects bumping into it.
    - Do not carry objects that could cause loss of balance.

FINAL WORD

Ladders are used at home and the workplace. People who use them at home often do not use ladders in the workplace; rules at home are often more relaxed than in the workplace. Using a ladder unproperly causes many accidents resulting in injuries and even death.