Safe Ladder Use Meeting Kit



Ladders are an essential tool on many job sites and at home. Because of their widespread use and the inherent danger of working at heights, they are responsible for a significant number of injuries both on and off the job.

LADDER USE PITFALLS

1. Despite some of the safety rules being very simple—they get ignored. When a piece of equipment is very familiar and used every day, it's easy to become complacent and misuse it. Every year many experienced workers fall off ladders, seriously injuring themselves or dying, because they've become so comfortable with working at heights that they've forgotten how dangerous it is. Frequent reminder training for ladder safety is an effective way to curb the effects of complacency.
2. The portability of ladders can give you a leg up just about anywhere, so ladder safety habits need to be carried everywhere too. Ladders are one of those pieces of equipment that are used at work and at home. Even though the same rules and risks apply both on and off the job, it can be easy to forego or forget workplace procedures when nobody is watching or the perception of risk changes in a more comfortable home environment.
3. The more frequently someone uses ladders at work, the more comfortable they'll be at home. This makes it especially important to instill strong safety habits and help people understand the temptation they'll face to take shortcuts, change their behavior or relax their attention to safety without the company culture and supervision that makes them think twice.
4. When using ladders at home, people are more likely to find reckless workarounds to work-impeding problems. If a ladder is too short, prop it up on something. No PPE handy? Use a hand to shield your eyes. These kinds of solutions would make a safety manager shudder and get employees into trouble, but at home there is only the person's knowledge, judgment, habits and internal culture of safety to guide them.
5. Employees who don't use ladders at work may have never been trained or given even a basic understanding of ladder use. So consider providing your entire staff with some level of ladder knowledge regardless of whether it is a requirement of the job. If they fall from a ladder at home, it may not be your responsibility, but it can lead to a lost-time injury that will affect your company negatively in many ways.
6. Whether you're talking ladder safety, PPE or DIY projects around the home, all types of workers would benefit from having a good understanding about how human factors like rushing, frustration, fatigue and complacency can lead them to make mistakes or not follow sound safety practices at home that could lead to serious, unexpected outcomes.

DO’S AND DONT’S OF LADDER USE

DO’S

- Avoid using the ladder if you feel dizzy or tired or are impaired.
- Make certain the ladder is free of grease, oil, mud and other sticky or slippery materials. Wear slip-resistant shoes with clean soles for maximum traction.
- Face the ladder and always grip the rungs, not the side rails.
- Extension ladders should extend 3 feet above the roof or platform you’re trying to reach.
- Block or guard doorways near any type of ladder so no one can open it and knock you off.
- Make certain the area is free of clutter both at the base and top of the ladder.
- 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.
- Use a ladder only on a stable and level surface, unless it has been secured (top or bottom) to prevent displacement.
- 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.
- Be sure that all locks on an extension ladder are properly engaged.
- Use the correct ladder for the job. There are many types of ladders to work in different situations. Check weight ratings to ensure you do not overload the ladder during use.

Don’ts

- If using a ladder outside, do not use in windy or inclement weather.
- Do not use a self-supporting ladder (e.g., step ladder) as a single ladder or in a partially closed position.
- 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.
- Do not stand on the three top rungs of a straight, single, or extension ladder.
- 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.
- Do not lean or reach to grab something while on a ladder.
- Do not carry objects up the ladder in your hands. Use a tool belt or a retrieval system to bring tools up to you once you have climbed the ladder.

FINAL WORD

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