

Ladder Safety

Toolbox Talk

An ordinary ladder can cause serious injuries. Ladders are involved in many accidents, some of which are fatal. Your life can depend on knowing how to inspect, use, and care for this tool.

Inspecting Ladders

Before using any ladder, inspect it. Look for:

- Loose or missing rungs, cleats, or bracing
- Loose nails, bolts, or screws
- Cracked, broken, split, dented, or badly worn rungs, cleats, or side rails
- Corrosion of metal ladders or metal parts
- Missing or damaged side rails or foot pads

If you find a ladder in poor condition, don't use it. Report its condition to management to be repaired or replaced. The ladder should be tagged and properly stored until action is taken.

Using Ladders

Choose the right size and type of ladder. Except where stairways, ramps, or runways are provided, use a ladder to move from one level to another. Some things to keep in mind:

- On straight ladders, the side rails should extend above the top support by at least 36 inches.
- Unless barriers are used to protect them, do not use ladders in doorways or walkways.
- Areas around the top and base of the ladder should be kept clear. Do not run hoses, extension cords, or ropes on a ladder – this could create a trip or fall hazard.
- Do not try to increase the height of a ladder by balancing it on boxes, barrels, or other objects. Never splice ladders together.

- Place the ladder on solid footing against a solid support. Do not try to use a step ladder as a straight ladder.
- Place the base of a straight ladder out and away from the wall of the upper landing one foot for every four feet of vertical height. A quick way to check this is to put your toes against the runners. If the ladder is at the correct angle, your outstretched arms should allow your hands to grasp the runners.
- Do not use ladders as a platform, runway, or scaffold.
- Tie in, block, or otherwise secure the top of a straight ladder to prevent it from shifting.
- To avoid slipping on a ladder, check it and your shoes for water, oil, grease, or mud and wipe it off before climbing.
- The front of your body should always face toward the ladder and be sure to maintain three points of contact with the ladder using both hands and feet. Do not try to carry tools or materials with you while climbing. Climb the ladder and have someone hand the items up to you.
- Do not lean out to the side when you are on a ladder. If something is out of reach, get down and move the ladder to the correct location.
- Most ladders are designed to support only one person at a time. Attempting to support more than that may cause the ladder to fail or throw it off balance.
- On a step ladder, never stand above the indicated top-most safe step or on the cross braces.
- Store ladders in well-ventilated areas, away from dampness.
- Ensure you do not exceed the maximum weight limit allowed for the ladder.