

5-MINUTE SAFETY TALK

LADDER SAFETY

When attempting to reach something at an inaccessible height it may seem easier to use a replacement for a ladder such as furniture, but it isn't worth the potential danger. Statistics show that every year about 30,000 people will be incapacitated by ladder and ladder-replacement involved accidents. Fortunately, almost all of these accidents can be prevented by a sturdy ladder and a firm foundation for the ladder to rest upon.

Choose the Right Ladder for the Job

When choosing a ladder always check to make sure it is tall enough and steady enough for the task in question. Keep in mind the weight and size of the instruments and tools you have to utilize. There are several kinds of ladders that are measured in sturdiness. Type 1 is an industrial-style ladder and can contain up to 250 lbs. Type 2 goes up to 225 lbs and type 3, designed for household tasks, can handle 200. Make sure not to put too much weight on any of these or it could result in an accident. If your job includes exposure to electrical wires never use a metal ladder as this is a frequent cause of electrocution, especially if working with power lines. Wooden ladders as well as non-conductive fiber-glass ladders are good replacements but make sure the wooden ones are dry.

Inspect the Ladder Before You Use It

Investigate every ladder before use it and make sure the spreaders can be locked in place and that the "feet" at the base are in place and rest flat on the ground. Ladders constructed out of metal of all kinds need plastic or rubber on the steps and feet. Also be sure that its steps aren't too narrow for you to maintain balance.

Keep in mind that loose and damaged rungs can appear to be stable but if too much pressure is applied and the ladder begins to twist it can lead to a hazard. Cracks can also occur. If something is loosened or there is a missing part that can be replaced then you might be able to fix that yourself. However if there is significant damage simply throw it out and invest in a new one.



Set Up Your Ladder Carefully

Place your ladder on a firm, level surface with its feet parallel to the wall it's resting against. If there is traffic or it's crowded where you are trying to work you can put up something separating you from the crowd as to avoid people crashing into you. A common way for discerning where to put a ladder is the "four to one rule" which implies setting the ladder one foot from the structure in relation to every four feet the ladder is tall.

Climb Cautiously

Never face away from the ladder when going up or crawling down. Use both hands and only keep the tools on you that are absolutely necessary. Use cordage to elevate heavy apparatuses. When using power-tools be sure the ladder is sturdily tied down. Ascend and descend the ladder with caution. It is very common for accidents to occur due to overreaching. With this in mind, always make sure you center yourself on the ladder. Only let one individual use the ladder at a time. Wear shoes that are non-slip and don't get on the ladder if your shoes or hands aren't dry. Always keep in mind that the top two rungs are not to be used as steps as this is extremely dangerous. Also always remember that someone should be stabilizing the ladder from below.

Reach New Heights in Safety

It doesn't take much to ensure safety when using a ladder as long as you adhere to four simple guidelines:

1. Use the ladder appropriate for the task at hand.
2. Check the ladder for damage or other things that could lead to unsafe use.
3. Thoroughly set the ladder up and do not rush.
4. Climb with caution
5. Don't climb with wet feet or hands
6. Do have a spotter to steady the ladder