

Let's Talk Safety #3

Ladders at Home and at Work

Ladders are an on-the-job hazard that you face every day, and a hazard that many homeowners face very often as well. Ladders are involved in many accidents, some of which are fatal. Your life can literally depend on knowing how to inspect, use and care for this common tool.

Inspecting ladders:

Before using any ladder, inspect it carefully. Look for the following faults:

- Loose or missing rungs or cleats
- Cracked, broken, split, dented or badly worn rungs, cleats, or siderails
- Wood splinters
- Corrosion of metal parts

If you find a ladder in poor condition, don't use it. Report it immediately. It should be tagged and properly repaired or immediately destroyed.

Using Ladders:

Choose the right size and type of ladder. Ladders are tools, and just like any other tools; you must choose the right one for the job. Follow these basic job rules for use of straight or extension ladders.

- Straight ladders must have side-rails that extend 36" beyond the landing.
- Ladders in heavy traffic areas are a mistake. Doors can open and knock them down, lifts and trucks can bump into you, and your tools and work can create an overhead hazard for those beneath you.
- Don't increase the height or reach of ladders by standing them on boxes, barrels, or other materials. Don't splice two ladders together either.
- Set the ladder on a solid footing surface. Use support whenever possible. Use a spotter at the base to hold it steady if you need it. Tie off all ladders whenever possible to prevent tipping and unexpected shifting.
- Do not allow hoses, power cords, and ropes to run on the rungs. These items should be run to the side of the ladder so they do not cause a tripping hazard while climbing.
- Always face a ladder when climbing up or down. Maintain a good solid grip on the ladder and use 3-point contact.
- Keep your belt buckle between the side rails. Leaning out too far will cause the ladder to tip or overbalance, and lead to a fall.
- Do not attempt to move a ladder while still standing on it. Do not practice "ladder-walking" or "bunny hops". Get off the ladder and move it safely from the ground.
- To avoid slipping, check your shoes and the ladder rungs for oil, grease, mud or other things that may cause a slipping hazard.