



SafetyAlert

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The Importance of Ladder Safety

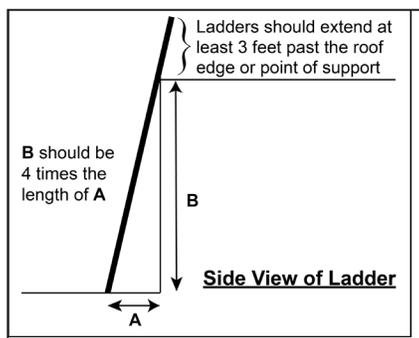
While ladders can be very useful tools on the job site, proper safe work practices must be followed to avoid injury or possibly even death. Each year, hundreds of thousands of people are treated in emergency rooms, walk-in clinics, doctors' offices, and other medical facilities as a result of failure to follow basic safe work practices when using ladders. In addition, over 300 people die each year from improper ladder usage. The average workers' compensation claim for a ladder fall is more than \$50,000 with hundreds of incidences occurring each year in Rhode Island.

There are several reasons why people are injured or killed each year as a result of accidents related to ladder usage. Some of the main causes include sliding of the ladder base or the ladder itself tipping sideways. Many people also sustain back injuries as a result of improperly carrying and setting up ladders.

The key factors for safe ladder usage involve choosing the right ladder for the job, inspecting the ladder before each use, and ensuring proper set up and usage of the ladder.

The following is a brief list of some items to keep in mind when using a ladder:

- Use only ladders that comply with OSHA design standards.
- Choose the right type of ladder for the job, stepladder or straight ladder, and do not apply more weight on the ladder than it is designed to support (including the user, tools, and materials).
- Inspect the ladder before each use using the Ladder Inspection Checklist.
- Set the ladder on a stable surface.



- Secure the ladder from movement when applicable.
- Set the ladder up using the 4-to-1 rule. For every four feet in height, set the base one foot out (see the Side View of Ladder).
- Keep the area around the top and bottom of the ladder clear of obstructions.
- Do not set up the ladder in an area such as a doorway or walkway unless barriers protect them.

- Always face the ladder and maintain three points of contact when ascending or descending.
- Keep your body centered between rails. Do not overreach. Read and follow the manufacturers instructions.
- Follow all safe work practices and ensure that proper safeguards are in place when using ladders around energized electrical equipment or power lines.



Ladder Inspection Checklist

General - Look for:

- Loose steps or rungs
- Loose nails, screws, bolts, or other parts
- Cracked, split, or broken uprights, braces, or rungs
- Slivers on uprights, rungs, or steps
- Damaged or worn non-slip bases

Step Ladders - Look for:

- Wobbles from side strain
- Loose or bent hinge spreaders
- Broken stop or hinge spreader
- Loose hinges
- Broken, split, or worn steps

Straight Ladders - Look for:

- Loose, broken, or missing extension locks
- Defective locks that do not function properly
- Worn or rotted rope

For additional information on ladder safety, visit www.OSHA.gov to review the following standards for general industry 1910.21, 1910.26, 1010.25, as well as the construction safety standards 1926, and 1050 - 1060.



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