

SAFETY ALERT

LADDER SAFETY

The Four Cornerstones of Ladder Safety



Select the Right Ladder for the Job:

- Never use wood or metal ladders for electrical work. Ladders that could contact exposed energized electrical equipment must have nonconductive side rails. Fiberglass ladders are nonconductive when clean and dry.
- Read and follow all manufacturers' instructions. Don't use a stepladder where a straight ladder is needed and vice versa. Ladders must only be used for the purpose for which they were designed.
- Check ladder capacity and strength. The worker's weight plus the weight of any tools and materials that are carried onto the ladder must be less than the duty rating.

Inspect Your Ladder:

- Check your ladder each time it is used. Look for damaged rungs and siderails, loose, broken or bent hardware.
- Check the condition of extension ladder ropes and pulleys.
- Tag a defective ladder as "Out of Service" and report it. Do Not Use It!
- Check to ensure that ladders are free of oil, grease and other hazards that could cause slips.

Set-Up the Ladder Properly:

- Get help to move or set up heavy and awkward ladders.
- Erect the ladder on a solid, level surface and install a manufacturer approved "leveler" if using on uneven surfaces. Do not put on top of boxes, barrels or other unstable objects.
- Secure base when raising an extension ladder and never set up when extended. Remember: ladders are not to be used on slippery surfaces unless they are secured or they have slip-resistant feet. Wet or muddy concrete can affect the performance of non-skid feet.
- Support the ladder at the top on both side rails, never on a rung.
- Install a single point support attachment when both rails cannot support the ladder such as against columns, poles or inside and outside corners.
- Check ladder angle. Make certain that non-self-supporting ladders are placed so that the working length of the ladder is 4 times the horizontal distance from the ladder's base to the structure – a 4:1 ratio.
- Protect the base from traffic. If a ladder must be used near a door, passageway or a driveway, make sure it is blocked or protected so that vehicles or pedestrians cannot strike them.
- Tie off and extend the ladder 36" to 42" above the dismount level when stepping off at a higher level.
- Secure the ladder against displacement by tying it at the top or the bottom or both, depending on the conditions. Make sure someone "foots" the bottom when tying off the top.
- Fully open stepladders and lock the spreader. All feet should contact a level supporting structure.

Use Safe Climbing Techniques:

- Don't rush. Keep eyes on the ladder and pay attention to hand and foot placement.
- Face the ladder and use both hands while climbing up or down. Grasp the side rails with both hands; you have a better chance of avoiding a fall if a rung or step fails. Do not overreach to either side. Overreaching is the most common cause of falls from ladders. Keep your belt buckle inside the rails of the ladder and your hips square to the rungs. If you can no longer reach from this position, get down and move the ladder.
- Apply the three-point rule: keep at least both feet and one hand or both hands and one foot on the ladder at all times. Hold the ladder with one hand while working with the other hand whenever possible. Use extreme caution when you are pushing/pulling materials. Don't carry loads that could cause you to lose your balance.
- The area around the top and the bottom of a ladder should be free from slipping and tripping hazards.
- Wear shoes that have non-slip soles. Clean mud, oil and grease from shoes before climbing.
- Carry tools in pockets or belt or raise and lower them with a hand line or hoist.
- Stay off the top two rungs of a straight or extension ladder and the top step and cap of a stepladder.

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