

Topic: Ladder Safety

12 Steps to Safe Ladder Use

Ladders are found at almost every worksite. But even though they are familiar pieces of equipment, they should not be treated casually. In one week in May 2011, three workers in British Columbia died after falling from ladders. And falling is not the only hazard workers face when using ladders. Other dangers include being struck by ladders or by materials falling from ladders, tripping over ladders, injuries caused by improper lifting of heavy ladders, and contacting electrical equipment with ladders.

Safe Practices

Here are some safe practices to follow when you need to use a ladder.

Step 1: Choose the right ladder for the job. For example, if a job calls for a straight ladder, do not use a step ladder instead.

Step 2: Before using a ladder, inspect it thoroughly. Check for loose rungs, loose screws or other loose metal parts. Are the braces and safety feet in good condition? Is the rope damaged? If the ladder is defective in any way, do not use it. Tag the ladder or notify your supervisor or maintenance department so that the ladder can be removed from service until repaired.

Step 3: Position the ladder so that the base is level and secure. Ensure that the area around the base of the ladder is clear of equipment and materials and that there is enough room for you to step off it safely.

Step 4: If you must place the ladder in an aisle or in front of a door, post a warning sign and have someone hold the ladder for you. Lock or block off the door.

Step 5: Ensure that the ladder is positioned away from live electrical circuits.

Step 6: Angle the ladder following the four-to-one rule and position it one foot back for each four feet up.

Step 7: Secure the top of the ladder.

Step 8: Hoist materials or attach them to your tool belt so that you can keep your hands free for climbing the ladder.

Step 9: Before climbing a ladder, check that your shoes are not muddy or slippery.

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Step 10: When climbing up or down, face the ladder and keep three points of contact with it at all times.

Step 11: Position your body so that you are always between the side rails. Do not stretch or reach beyond the side rails.

Step 12: Do not stand higher than the third rung from the top of a ladder.

Conclusion

Injuries involving ladders can be very serious. Whenever your job calls for the use of a ladder, take the time to follow proper safe practices.

Questions:

1. If you're about to use a ladder that you used yesterday, it's not necessary to inspect it again.
True or False

2. Ladders should be positioned _____.

- a. one foot back for each four feet up
- b. one foot up for each four feet back
- c. one foot back for each two feet up
- d. one foot back for each three feet up

3. When climbing up or down a ladder, you should maintain two points of contact with it at all times.

True or False

4. It is safe to reach beyond the side rails, as long as you maintain three points of contact with a ladder.

True or False

5. Do not stand higher than the _____ rung from the top of a ladder.

- a. fourth
- b. third
- c. second
- d. first

Answers:

1 False, 2 a, 3 False, you should maintain three points of contact, 4 False, 5 b