



LADDER SAFETY

There is absolutely no reason for anybody to get hurt, disabled or killed while using a ladder. Yet it happens every single day. Somebody steps on the safety sticker that says, "This is not a step!" and ends up with a broken leg. Another worker puts a rock under one of the legs because the ladder is "just not quite stable enough". On the way to the hospital, it occurs to her, through the pain of her broken arm, that maybe that was not such a good idea after all. On another job, a fellow reaches out just a little bit to far and well...he's no longer with us. Virtually every single ladder accident could and should have been prevented. It only takes a little bit of common sense, SAFETY SENSE, to prevent an accident from occurring while using ladders. Stick to the following simple rules to ensure that you or your fellow workers are never injured while using a ladder.

- **CHOOSE THE RIGHT LADDER:** Always select a ladder, which is the correct length to safely, reach the working height. Also ensure that the ladder is of the correct duty, or weight rating. The combined weight of the user, their tools and materials should NEVER exceed the rating of the ladder. Most ladders are available with weight ratings of 200, 225, 250 and 300 lbs. Select the right one or GET the right one.
- **CHECK THE CONDITION OF THE LADDER:** Read all the labels on the ladder then check for split or cracked side rails, missing or broken rungs, loose rungs or other weaknesses. Also check for splinters and sharp edges.
- **PLACE THE LADDER WITH YOUR SAFETY IN MIND:** Use your head and think safety before you setup the ladder. Make sure the ladder has firm footing and that its feet are one quarter the length of the ladder away from the upright surface to be climbed. Don't use a stepladder as a single ladder. If you are using a stepladder, make sure it is fully open with the spreaders properly locked.
- **CLIMB THE LADDER CAREFULLY.** Keep your mind on where you are and what you're doing. Wear the proper shoes with good soles and that are free of grease or mud. Always face the ladder and use both hands when climbing up or down. Don't carry your tools or materials: raise and lower them with a hand line: *don't have someone toss them up to you or just drop them when you are finished.* If you don't feel well, DON'T climb the ladder. Always climb and work from the center of the ladder. Don't climb up the "back" side of a stepladder and never stand on the top of it.

- **NEVER OVERREACH! MOVE THE LADDER INSTEAD:** Breaking this one simple rule causes more accidents than you can possibly imagine.
- **TIE OFF THE LADDER:** Once you have climbed to your working height, tie-off the ladder and use a safety belt.
- **TAKE CARE OF YOUR LADDERS:** When you are finished with your ladder put it back where it belongs. Always keep them clean and free of excess material. Store them in a safe and dry place, out of direct exposure to the sun and the elements. Make sure your ladders are tied down during transit. Never paint a wooden ladder. You can however use clear wood preservatives.

Your ladder is one of your most important tools. It is also is one or your most unforgiving if misused or mistreated; so use it safely and wisely.

You should always select a ladder that is long enough for the work to be done. As a rule of thumb, and to allow for reasonable safety, the ladder should be long enough so that you can work standing no higher than the fourth rung from the top. This allows you to grasp the side rails of the ladder.

The top of the ladder should never extend more than three or four feet above its upper support. Never step on a rung above the upper support since it's liable to make the base of the ladder "kick out."

When climbing or coming down a ladder, always face the ladder and keep both hands free for gripping the side rails.

Wall grips on the tops of risers are useful to prevent side slipping when the ladder's leaning against a smooth surface. The top and bottom of the ladder should be secured to prevent shifting. Safety feet, cleats, lashing, etc., can be used to make portable ladders secure.

When placing the ladder make sure you don't rest it against a sash or window pane. A board securely fastened (not nailed) across the top of the ladder will provide a solid bearing at each side of the window.

If you must rest a ladder against a pole, or round column, be sure the upper end of the ladder is firm so it won't slip or cause the ladder to fall. When ladders are used this way, they are less likely to sway or fall if the upper end is equipped with a rung of webbing or similar material.

When carrying a ladder, balance it on your shoulder near the center. Keep the front end of the ladder



high enough to clear the top of anyone's head and the back end close to the ground. Be extra careful and keep your mind on where the ladder is in relation to the people and objects around you as you carry it. Pay particular attention when you approach passageways and doorways or any place where your view is obstructed.

NEVER stand a ladder on a box or barrel or any other makeshift objects so as to increase its reach. Another words, ALWAYS use a ladder that is the correct height for the work at hand. If you don't have a ladder that is long enough then get one. If you must borrow a ladder be sure to thoroughly inspect it and make sure it is safe.

Before climbing a ladder make sure it is at the proper angle. The recommended angel is about 75 degrees from horizontal. If the base is out too far, the stress on the side rails is more severe and the wider angle can cause slippage. If the horizontal distance is much less that one-fourth of the incline length of the ladder, it is pitched to steep for safe work.

Store your ladders in dry, well-ventilated locations where they are not exposed to the weather or excessive heat or dampness. When stored horizontally, support both ends and at in-between points to keep the middle from sagging, and maybe loosening the rungs or cleats and warping the rails.

Treat wood ladders periodically with a clear preservative such as clear varnish, white shellac or linseed oil. Never paint a ladder because it hides defects and deterioration.

Ladders are necessary and useful tools. Be sure to use yours safely and take care of them when not in use so that they remain useful and SAFE tools.