

Ladders can be dangerous when not used properly. Falls from a step, straight, combination, or extension portable ladder are one of the leading causes of on-the-job injuries and fatalities, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Employees' lives depend on knowing how to properly inspect, use, and maintain ladders.

Inspecting Ladders

- Before using any ladder, check for:
 - loose or missing rungs, cleats, or bracing;
 - loose nails, bolts, or screws;
 - cracked, broken, split, dented, badly worn, or missing rungs, cleats, or side rails;
 - wood splinters;
 - corroded metal parts;
 - damaged or missing foot pads; and
 - water, oil, grease, mud, or other slippery substances (also check your shoes).
- If you find a ladder in poor condition, do not use it! Instead:
 - report it to a supervisor,
 - tag it as "Dangerous: Do Not Use," and
 - have it repaired or destroyed.



Using Ladders

- Don't use a ladder where you can use stairs, ramps, or runways.
- Choose the right type and size of ladder for the task.
 - Do not increase a ladder's height by standing it on top of boxes, barrels, or other objects.
 - Never splice two ladders together.
 - Don't exceed the ladder's maximum allowed weight. Most ladders are designed to hold one person at a time. See TABLE 1 for weight limits.
 - Don't use ladders as a platform, runway, or scaffold.
 - Don't try to use a self-supporting ladder (such as a stepladder) as a straight ladder.
 - Read and follow all ladder labels, instructions, and warnings.
- Use a straight ladder properly.
 - Be sure it is long enough for side rails to extend above the top support point by at least three feet.
 - Place its base away from the wall or the edge of the upper landing one foot for every four feet of vertical height. A quick way to check this is to stand facing the ladder with your toes against the runners. If the ladder is at the correct angle, you should be able to grasp the runners with outstretched arms.
 - Tie in, block, or secure the top of the straight ladder to keep it from moving.

Ladder Type	Weight Limit	Description
Type 1-AA	375 pounds	Special Duty
Type 1-A	300 pounds	Heavy Duty Industrial
Type I	250 pounds	Heavy Duty
Type II	225 pounds	Medium Duty
Type III	200 pounds	Light Duty

- Set up ladders safely.
 - Unless protective barriers are in place, don't set up ladders in doorways or walkways where people could run into them.
 - Never use metal ladders near power lines or exposed, energized electrical equipment.
 - Set the ladder on solid footing against a solid support.
 - Keep the area around the top and base of the ladder clear. Don't run hoses, extension cords, or ropes on a ladder that could create a trip or fall hazard, or cause the ladder to move unexpectedly.
 - Climb ladders correctly.
 - Never stand on a stepladder's cross braces.
 - Never stand above a ladder's topmost safe step, as indicated on the ladder's label.
 - Keep your body near the middle of the step, and always face the ladder.
 - Maintain three points of contact with the ladder (using two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand).
 - Don't try to carry tools or materials up with you if you cannot do so while maintaining three points of contact with the ladder.
 - Don't lean out to the side when you're on a ladder. If something is out of reach, get down and move the ladder closer to the item you are trying to reach.
 - Store ladders in dry, well-ventilated areas.
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