

Ladder Safety for School Custodians

There are many factors that school custodians must consider when working safely with ladders. Following key practices of ladder safety can help prevent a potential injury.



School custodians should inspect ladders for cracks, loose rungs, as well as sharp edges and slivers before each use. Never use a ladder if it appears to be in poor condition or repairs are needed. Read the manufacturer weight limit guidelines that are posted on the ladder and follow them closely. Staff should ensure ladders are set on firm ground and against a solid support during use. If using a step ladder, completely open the step ladder confirming both spreaders are locked in position and make certain it is stable before using it. Never place the ladder in a doorway or exit pathway. Never stand higher than the second step from the top. If you must use this option, consider using a longer ladder for your task. Remember never to use a step ladder as an extension ladder when trying to reach high areas.

When using an extension ladder, be sure to position it at such an angle that the horizontal distance from the top support to the foot of the ladder is about 1/4 the working length of the ladder. Staff should never place a ladder on boxes or unstable bases, never use on soft ground or an unstable footing. Never use an extension ladder horizontally like a platform or scaffold. A spotter should be used or strap the ladder to a fixed object when utilizing an extension ladder. Always maintain a 3-point contact (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand) when climbing/descending any ladder. Carry tools in a tool belt or raise your tools up with a hand line to keep your hands free while climbing or descending.

Immediately store the ladder in a safe area when your task is completed. Never leave ladders unattended. Do not store portable ladders next to doorways, exits or blind corners, where they can be struck by someone. Portable extension ladders should be stored so they will remain flat and evenly supported. Use a strap or similar device to prevent the ladders from falling over when they are stored in upright positions.

Falls from ladders injure many school employees each year, so pay attention to the safety measures associated with proper ladder use. Consider reviewing the video Ladder Safety (SS8019AE) in the [Safety Source Video Library](#) online. For more details contact Director of Loss Control, Robert Blaisdell, at rblaisdell@wrightinsurance.com.