

Avoid Falls from Ladders

A fall from any type of ladder, no matter the height of the fall, can create a serious injury. Injuries due to falls from ladders are frequent occurrences and they are mostly deemed to be preventable. Follow these key safety practices to keep yourself and your colleagues safe when using ladders in the workplace.

Ladders need to be inspected for defects and unsafe conditions before use. Inspect them for cracks, loose rungs, uneven sitting, loose or missing foot pads, loose or missing spreaders, slivers, and sharp edges prior to every use. Never use a ladder if it appears to be in poor condition. Read the manufacturer's weight limit guidelines that are posted on the ladder and adhere to them. Staff should ensure ladders are set on firm ground, never used on uneven or loose surfacing, and placed against a solid upper support (extension ladders) during use. If using a step ladder, completely open the step ladder, locking the spreaders in place, and make certain it is stable before using it. Extension ladders have rung locks used to secure the rungs so they will not slide down during use. Never place the ladder in a doorway or exit pathway where people could unknowingly walk into it. Never stand higher than the second step from the top as this will contribute to a "top-heavy" ladder likely to tip over. For this reason, extension ladders should have their top two rungs situated above the upper support or access point. Remember to never use a step ladder as an extension ladder when trying to reach high areas. Using the right equipment will make certain a job is completed safely.



When using an extension ladder, be sure to follow the 4-to-1 rule, which equates to every four feet in climbing height, the base of the ladder must be one foot from wall. For example, an extension ladder set at a 20-foot height should have the feet located 5-feet from the base of the wall. Too close and the top could tip backwards. Too far away from the wall at the base, and the legs could slide out, away from the wall. Never use an extension ladder horizontally like a platform or scaffold. Important: always maintain 3-points of contact (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand) when climbing and descending any ladder. Carry tools in a tool belt or raise tools up using a hand line.

Properly store the ladder immediately when your job task is completed. 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 retain the ladders against a wall, to keep them from falling over.

[Safety Source](#) provides several safety videos on the topic of ladder safety.