

National Ladder Safety Month

For National Ladder Safety Month, we're covering how to minimize ladder-related injuries and maximize safety. Ladders contribute to slip and fall injuries, ranging from small scrapes to death. Protect yourself and others by following these tips when using ladders in the workplace.

According to the National Safety Council, to start, discuss with your coworkers whether a ladder is necessary for the task at hand or if there is another way to complete it safely. Then determine what safety equipment you need, like a hard hat, safety glasses, or gloves. Ensure there are no potential hazards before starting, and if working outside, check for inclement weather [1].

Next, respect ladder limitations. Know the difference between when to use a step ladder versus an extension ladder. Ladders are rated for the worksite environment (material) and maximum weight capacity, referred to as a duty rating. For example, an aluminum ladder would be unsafe when working near electricity, as it is an electrical conductor. Be sure to choose the appropriate ladder for the job and abide by its constraints [2].

In addition, keep ladder safety top of mind through routine training and standards. Follow rules such as these:

- **Extension Ladder 4-to-1 Rule:** The base of the ladder must be placed one foot away from the supporting structure for every four feet of ladder height.
- **Extension Ladder 3 Feet Rule:** Ladders should extend a minimum of three feet above the wall, roof line, or landing.
- **Three Points of Contact:** Always maintain three points of contact, such as two feet and a hand or two hands and a foot, and keep your body within the ladder rails while climbing and descending.

Lastly, routinely inspect and maintain your ladders. Assess the ladders not only before use, but throughout the year, and maintain a checklist on the process. Ladders should be inspected by a ladder safety competent person, per OSHA, for visible defects periodically and after any occurrence that could affect their safe use.

Ladder safety, like any program in your department, reflects the overall safety culture at your municipality. Even if ladders are a frequent part of work tasks, an annual refresher is always beneficial to ensure continued safe use. Protect yourself and others by understanding ladder limitations, following rules, and routinely inspecting ladders for visible defects.

[1] [National Safety Council Safety Topics: Slips, Trips, and Falls](#)

[2] [American Ladder Institute: Ladders 101](#)