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Ladder Safety

A 5-Minute Safety Training Aid

Do you know there's a killer on the job that you probably meet face-to-face everyday? A common, ordinary ladder can be a killer. Ladders are involved in many accidents, some of which are fatal. Your life literally can depend on knowing how to inspect, use, and care for this tool.

Inspecting ladders

Before using any ladder, inspect it. Look for the following faults:

1. loose or missing rungs, cleats, or bracing;
2. loose nails, bolts, or screws;
3. cracked, broken, split, dented, or badly worn rungs, cleats, or side rails;
4. wood splinters;
5. corrosion of metal ladders or metal parts, and
6. missing or damaged side rails or foot pads.

If you find a ladder in poor condition, don't use it. Report it. It should be tagged and properly repaired or immediately destroyed.

Using ladders

Choose the right type and size ladder. Except where stairways, ramps, or runways are provided, use a ladder to go from one level to another. Keep these tips in mind:

1. Be sure straight ladders are long enough so that the side rails extend above the top support point by at least 36 inches.
2. Don't set up ladders in areas such as doorways or walkways where others may run into them, unless barriers protect them. Keep the area around the top and base of the ladder clear. Don't run hoses, extension cords, or ropes on a ladder that would create a trip or fall hazard.

3. Don't try to increase the height of a ladder by standing it on boxes, barrels, or other objects. Never splice two ladders together.
4. Set the ladder on solid footing against a solid support. Don't try to use a stepladder as a straight ladder.
5. Place the base of straight ladders out away from the wall or edge of the upper level about one foot for every four feet of vertical height. Don't use ladders as a platform, runway, or scaffold.
6. Tie in, block, or otherwise secure the top of straight ladders to prevent them from being displaced.
7. To avoid slipping on a ladder, check your shoes for oil, grease, or mud and wipe it off before climbing.
8. Always face the ladder and hold on with both hands when climbing up or down. Don't try to carry tools or materials with you.
9. 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 over.
10. Most ladders are designed to hold only one person at a time. Two may cause the ladder to fail or throw it off balance.
11. On a step ladder, never stand above the indicated topmost safe step or on the crossbraces.
12. Store ladders in well-ventilated areas, away from dampness.
13. Ensure you do not exceed the maximum weight limit allowed for the ladder.

Remember to practice safety. Don't learn it by accident.



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