



### **Introduction**

When we think of ladder safety and fall protection, we usually associate them with construction, but ladder safety and fall protection are just as important for maintenance, repairs, and everyday home improvement tasks.

A fall from any height can result in a concussion, traumatic brain injury, and in some cases, death. Ladder accidents are common at home and in the workplace and the majority of ladder deaths are from falls 10 feet or less. In 2011, ladder falls caused 113 fatalities in the workplace alone.

This week we will discuss three commonly used ladder types, how to safely use them, and safe storing and handling techniques that you can easily implement to your usage.

### **Monday – Fixed Access Ladders**

Fixed access ladders are commonly found on building sides and as emergency second exits.

When using this type of ladder, there are a few rules you should follow:

- If you need to transport tools, do not carry them on your person. Hoist the tools up and down with ropes and proper rigging.
- Wear proper footwear that is in good condition.
- If working with others, make sure they are clear and out of the way of potential hazards.
- Never have more than one person on the ladder at a time.
- Always maintain 3-point contact. This means 2 feet and 1 hand or 1 foot and 2 hands should stay on the ladder at all times.
- Always face the ladder with feet on rungs and hands gripping firmly.

### **Tuesday – Step Ladders**

Step ladders are commonly used for smaller tasks and to help us reach objects on higher shelving. Many times, the risks associated with these ladders are disregarded due to their size, but an injury can happen even at ground level.

Stay safe when using step ladders with these tips:

- Check the maximum weight the ladder can handle and make sure your weight and the weight of the load is under the max.
- Never work while standing on the top step of the ladder.
- Before use, check the ladder for damage, such as cracks, loose rivets, or bad or missing grips on the feet.
- Make sure the ladder is free from oils or grease that could make it slip, and that the locks operate properly.
- When opening a ladder, ensure it is locked in position with the spreader bars before stepping on it.
- Always place the ladder to the right working angles relating to the task at hand.

### **Wednesday – Extension Ladders**

Extension ladders are used for high areas you may need to access such as trimming treetops, getting onto a roof, or maintenance on the side of a building. These ladders are not self-supporting and require a stable structure that can hold the weight load you are using it for.

Extension ladders can range from 16 feet to more than 40 feet. When supporting extension ladders against a structure, make sure they extend a minimum of 3 feet past the edge, but no more than 4 feet. The proper working height and angle of



## Weekly Safety Briefings

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### ***Ladder Safety & Fall Protection***

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a ladder and a structure follows a 4:1 ratio: for every 4 feet of height of the supporting surface, there should be 1 foot of distance between the base of the structure and the ladder. For example, for a 20 foot tall structure, there should be 5 feet of distance between the base of the ladder and the base of the structure.

Sometimes, extension ladders are required to get a job done. Here are some extra safety tips to keep in mind next time you find yourself having to use one:

- Keep ladder on a firm, leveled surface. Setting up in mud or loose dirt can cause instability and lead to a trip or fall incident.
- Never adjust ladder height while it is in use.
- Before stepping on the ladder, tie the base of the ladder to a solid structure or stake it into the ground to secure it from sliding out from underneath you.
- Maintain proper overlap of the ladders sections. Do not overextend past the manufacturer's guidelines.
- When applicable, always check your local health and safety regulations and codes.
- If you are going to climb to extreme heights, ensure you have the proper training and rigging to use the ladder.
- Have the ladder inspected periodically to make sure it is safe for use.
- Set up warning signs when using a ladder in a door or passageway.

#### **Thursday – Handling and Storing**

While knowing how to safely use different types of ladders is important in preventing injuries, if you don't know how to properly handle and store these tools, you're setting yourself up for potential accidents.

Whether at home or in the workplace, review these tips to ensure you are properly handling and storing your ladders before starting and after finishing any tasks.

- Before storing ladder, remove any accessories and make sure the ladder is clean.
- Store wooden ladders in an area with good ventilation. Excessive moisture and heat may lead to rot.
- Store ladders in clean, easy to reach places.
- If transporting ladders on a vehicle, avoid long overhangs and tie to support points so they don't slip off.
- If the ladder is too heavy or awkward to carry on your own, find someone to help you and position yourselves on the same side of the ladder.
- Always carry the ladder by gripping in the middle of the rungs.
- Always use caution when going through doors or passage ways. Views can easily be obstructed and can cause an accident.

#### **Friday - Discussion**

Can you think of a time you practiced or witnessed dangerous behavior involving a ladder? Did you or anyone else get hurt? Were there any consequences? How did you correct your behavior? What improvements do you think should be made to ladder usage training?