



Cornell University

Toolbox Safety Talk ***Ladder Safety***

Slips, trips, and falls constitute the majority of general industry and construction worker injuries. Falls cause 15% of all accidental deaths, and are second only to motor vehicle accidents as the leading cause of fatalities. Ladders are a common tool that employees use to accomplish elevated work tasks. Like any tool, ladders must be used properly to ensure employee safety.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL LADDERS

- All employees shall receive training before using a ladder at work.
- All portable ladders shall be clearly marked with their rated capacity, with a minimum Type I or II rating (>225lbs). Type III ladders (200lb limit) shall not be used by university employees at work.
- Employees shall visually inspect ladders for defects and damage before each use. Damaged ladders shall be removed from service.
- Use non-conductive ladders (fiberglass preferred) when performing electrical tasks.

SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR EMPLOYEES UTILIZING LADDERS

- Choose the appropriate ladder for the task.
- Only use ladders on stable and level surfaces.
- Keep the area around the top and bottom of the ladder clear.
- Face the ladder when ascending or descending.
- Keep your belt buckle within the side rails at all times.
- Use the "3-Point Rule": At least two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand, should be in contact with the ladder when ascending or descending.
- Keep tools in a tool belt in order to free up your hands for climbing. Heavy or bulky items should be brought up only after you have reached the top.

STEP LADDER SAFETY

- Step ladders must only be used in the locked-open position.
- Do not stand on the top two steps of a step ladder. The employee's knees shall always be below the top rung of the ladder.

EXTENSION/STRAIGHT LADDER SAFETY

- To ensure a safe position, the horizontal distance from the support structure to the foot of the ladder shall be 1/4 the working length of the ladder (example: A 20' extension ladder should have its base 5' from the bottom of the wall).
- When using a portable ladder for access to an upper landing surface, the side rails must extend at least 3 feet above the upper landing surface.
- Tie-off or otherwise secure the top of extension/straight ladders to ensure stability.
- Do not stand on the top 3 steps of an extension/straight ladder.

FIXED LADDERS

- Must be able to support 500 lbs.
- Must extend at least 42" past the upper landing surface.
- A fixed ladder 20 feet or longer must have a protective cage, self-retracting lifeline, or ladder climbing safety device.

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