



052: Ladder Safety

Generic ladder safety

Never use aluminum ladders for electrical work or in the vicinity of power sources. Use a wood or fiberglass ladder, instead.

Never use a painted wooden ladder. Among the dangers: the paint may be electrically conductive, and it reduces the friction needed for your hands and feet to stay in place on the ladder.

Do not put your arms between the side rails when carrying a ladder. Doing so makes you vulnerable in injuries such as a torn rotator cuff.

Carry a ladder with its feet pointed forward. When you set the ladder down from this position, its feet are already in place. If you carry the ladder with the feet pointed behind you, you'll be tempted to swing the ladder in a dangerous manner or you'll need to set it down and pick it up again.

Use a ladder tall enough for the job. It takes less time to get the right ladder than it does to recover from a typical fall off a ladder.

On smooth, hard surfaces, use a ladder with rubber feet. On uneven or icy surfaces, use a ladder with spurs.

Visually inspect the ladder before each use. Remove grease, mud, oil, or other slip hazards. Look for protruding rivets, loose steps or rungs, cracks in the side rails, or other mechanical damage—if these are present, take the ladder out of service.

Note the weight limit, and allow for the weight of equipment and supplies in addition to your own body weight.

If you must place the ladder on an unstable surface, make it as stable as possible. If, for example, the surface is gravel, dig the feet into the gravel. Then, secure the ladder by some additional means.

Except for emergencies, observe the “one person on a ladder” rule. Even if the weight limit would allow two people, there is too much risk of stepping on heads and fingers—and both people can fall in such an instance.

Use the three-point contact method when climbing. This requires two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand, to be in place on the ladder at all times.

Use the steps, not the cross braces, for supporting your weight. The cross braces are not designed for this purpose, do not provide sufficient traction, and may give way.

Do not sit or stand on the top step or next-to-the-top step of any ladder. One reason: the top step doesn't have a “stop” built into it. If you stand on the second rung down, the top step stops your shins from moving forward—and off the ladder.

Do not over-reach while using a ladder. This is the number one cause of ladder injuries. Instead, climb down and move the ladder. If you are leaning your body away from the center of the ladder, you are over-reaching.

Never move a ladder without first checking to ensure nothing on top of it will fall off. Also, check to ensure the top won't snag on something—this could force you to suddenly support the weight of the ladder.

Do not carry materials up a ladder. Have someone hand you materials, or use tag line to raise them to you once you are up the ladder.

Discussion leader duties for this session:

Obtain a ladder that a crewmember can use during the discussion portion to demonstrate key points learned.

What this Safety Talk covers:

Generic ladder safety, with additional specific steps for step and extension ladders.

Discussion notes :

