Keep Aluminum Ladders Away From Electricity

Aluminum ladders are lightweight and easy to use.

But aluminum ladders have one major drawback-they conduct electricity more readily than ladders made of other materials such as wood or fiberglass.

That is why they should never be used for any sort of electrical work-even for changing a light bulb. They should never be used in any area where there is danger of them contacting an electrical source such as overhead power lines or light fixtures.

Here are some things to look for before you use an aluminum ladder:

- Check for defects such as dents and twisting.
- Make sure all the rungs are tight in the side rails and that any bracing is in good condition.
- On aluminum extension ladders, also check ropes, pulleys and fittings to make sure they are secure and in good condition.
- Check for signs of damage. A ladder which has been dropped or exposed to fire may be unsafe to use.
- Make sure that the anti-slip footings on the ladder are in good condition and are not loose.
- If you find any defects in an aluminum ladder (or any other kind of ladder), remove it from service and tag it so that it can be inspected, repaired or destroyed.

Here are some general tips for safe use of ladders, including aluminum models:

- Choose the right ladder for the job, one which is neither too long nor too short.
- Put the ladder on a level, solid surface.
- If it’s a straight ladder, extend it at least three feet above the top support.
- Remember the 4 to 1 ratio. For every 4 feet up, the base of

the ladder should be 1 foot out.

- On an extension ladder, the sections should overlap by a minimum of three feet, with more overlap for longer ladders.
- Tie or secure the top of the ladder. If this is not possible, tie off the bottom or have someone hold it.
- Always face the ladder and use both hands when climbing up or down.
- With a step-ladder, do not step on the top two steps. With a straight ladder, do not step on the top four rungs.
- To avoid tipping the ladder to the side, always try to keep your body within the siderails of the ladder. Do not lean to either side.
- Wear non-skid, well-fitting footwear which is free of grease or mud.
- Carry tools on a belt or hoist them up, and hoist up materials as well. Do not carry them in your hands.
- Do not paint ladders because it is difficult to see defects or damage when they are covered by paint.

Follow these general guidelines to use a ladder safely. Keep all ladders away from overhead wires and electrical fittings. Don’t use aluminum ladders around any electrical installation.