Keep Up With Ladder Safety Meeting Kit

What’s At Stake

Ladder safety begins with selecting the right ladder for the job and includes inspection, setup, proper climbing or standing, proper use, care, and storage. This combination of safe equipment and its safe use can eliminate most ladder accidents.

What’s the Danger

LADDER RISK/HARMS

1. Despite some of the safety rules being very simple—or maybe because of their simplicity—they get ignored. When a piece of equipment is very familiar and used every day, it’s easy to become complacent and misuse it. Every year, many experienced workers fall off ladders seriously injuring themselves or dying because they’ve become so comfortable with working at heights that they’ve forgotten how dangerous it is.
2. Ladders are one of those pieces of equipment that are used at work and at home. Even though the same rules and risks apply both on and off the job, it can be easy to forego or forget workplace procedures when nobody is watching or the perception of risk changes in a more comfortable home environment.
3. The more frequently someone uses ladders at work, the more comfortable they’ll feel. This makes it especially important to instill strong safety habits and help people understand the temptation they’ll face to take shortcuts, change their behavior or relax their attention to safety without the company culture and supervision that makes them think twice.
4. When using ladders at home, people are more likely to find reckless workarounds to work-impeding problems. If a ladder

is too short, prop it up on something. No PPE handy? Use a hand to shield your eyes.
5. Consider providing your entire staff with some level of ladder knowledge regardless of whether it is a requirement of the job.
6. Whether you're talking ladder safety, all types of workers would benefit from having a good understanding about how human factors like rushing, frustration, fatigue and complacency can lead them to make mistakes or not follow sound safety practices that could lead to serious, unexpected outcomes—and therefore how important it is to understand and follow rules even when nobody is watching.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

MAIN TYPES OF LADDER ACCIDENTS

1. Selecting Wrong Kind of Ladder

Like most other jobs, choosing the right tool can make all the difference when it comes to safety and this is the same for ladders. One thing to consider when selecting an appropriate ladder is the ladder's weight capacity. Each ladder is designed to support a maximum weight limit and if the climber exceeds that limit the ladder could break and cause the user to fall or become injured.

2. Using Worn or Damaged Ladders

Another common contributing factor to ladder accidents is the use of old, worn, or damaged ladders. Like everything else, ladders have a shelf life; after a couple of years the stress of being climbed up and down on causes ladders to break down. Damaged ladders are extremely dangerous as they can easily break while being used and cause serious injuries. To protect yourself from damaged or broken ladders, make sure to thoroughly inspect each ladder before using it.

3. Incorrect Use of Ladders

Human error is by far the leading cause of ladder accidents. Never use a ladder in any other way than what the manufacturer intended it to be used for. Also, do not lengthen or alter a ladder in any way. While using a ladder always maintain 3 points of contact with the ladder to ensure stability. Also, never attempt to reach for something while on the ladder. It is much safer to get off the ladder, move it, and then climb back up.

4. Incorrect Placement of Ladders

Make sure that when positioning a ladder, the ground you place it on is level and firm. Ladders should never be placed in front of a door that is not locked, blocked, or guarded.

POTENTIAL HARMFUL LADDER USE

- Avoid using the ladder if you feel dizzy or tired or are impaired.
- If using a ladder outside, do not use in windy or inclement weather.
- Make certain the ladder is free of grease, oil, mud and other sticky or slippery materials.
- Wear slip-resistant shoes with clean soles for maximum traction.
- Face the ladder and always grip the rungs, not the side rails.
- Always keep three points of contact with the ladder: Two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand.
- Extension ladders should extend 3 feet above the roof or platform you’re trying to reach.
- Do not stand higher than the step indicated on the label marking the highest standing level.
- Don’t lean or overreach; reposition the ladder instead.
- Do not move the ladder while in use.
- Take your time when climbing down so you don’t skip any steps.
- Don’t climb while carrying tools; use a tool belt.
- Never have someone climb up to bring you something; only one person should be on a ladder at a time.

BEST LADDER SAFE WORK PRACTICES OVERVIEW

- Ensure you understand the hazards associated with the ladder you are using.
- Never stand on the top step if it is not designed to be a step.
- Do not lean or reach to grab something while on a ladder. Climb down and re-position the ladder.
- Do not carry objects up the ladder in your hands. Use a tool belt or a retrieval system to bring tools up to you once you have climbed the ladder. Always have your hands free when climbing so you are able to have three points of contact with the ladder.
- Always inspect a ladder before use. If there is any problems with it, immediately tag it out of use.
- Use the correct ladder for the job. There are many types of ladders to work in different situations. Check weight ratings to ensure you do not overload the ladder during use.
- Always secure the ladder. Make sure the ladder is stable on the ground before climbing up. Tie off the ladder to the structure you are next to. Have someone hold the ladder to secure it.

FINAL WORD

Ladders are used at home and the workplace. People who use them at home often do not use ladders in the workplace; rules at home are often more relaxed than in the workplace.