Ladder Safety for Municipalities Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Ladder safety refers to the practices and procedures that are put in place to prevent injuries and accidents when working with ladders. Ladder safety for municipalities involves implementing measures to ensure that workers can safely and effectively use ladders while performing their job duties.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

MUNICIPALITIES MUST BE AWARE OF LADDER HAZARDS

Ladders pose significant hazards, particularly when used improperly or when they are not well-maintained.

- **Falls:** Falls are one of the most common hazards associated with ladder use. Municipal workers who use ladders can fall off the ladder, which can result in serious injuries or even fatalities. Falls can occur due to a variety of factors, including improper ladder placement, overreaching, and using a ladder that is too short for the task at hand.
- **Electrical hazards:** When working near power lines or electrical equipment, ladders can pose a significant electrical hazard. If a ladder comes into contact with an energized electrical conductor, the worker can be electrocuted.
- **Improper ladder selection:** Using the wrong type of ladder for the job can increase the risk of accidents. For example, using a stepladder for a task that requires an extension ladder can increase the risk of falls.
- **Lack of ladder maintenance:** Ladders that are not properly maintained can pose a significant hazard. If a ladder is damaged or missing components, it can break or collapse

while in use, leading to accidents.

- **Improper use:** Using a ladder improperly can also lead to accidents. Workers who use ladders should be trained in ladder safety and should follow manufacturer instructions and safety guidelines.
- **Overreaching:** Overreaching is another common hazard associated with ladders. When a person reaches too far to one side or another, the ladder can become unstable and tip over. Municipalities should provide employees with the appropriate ladder length for the task and train them to reposition the ladder as necessary instead of overreaching.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

BEST LADDER SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

1. Choose the right ladder: Different types of ladders have different uses. Each ladder type has a different load rating. When choosing the most suitable ladder for the job, it is important to consider the weight of the person climbing the ladder plus the weight of the tools, materials, and equipment.

2. Check for damages or issues before each use: Over time a ladder may acquire issues that may lead to it being unreliable. A competent person should be assigned to visually inspect ladders for defects periodically. Below are some defects you should look out for:

- Structural damage, split/bent side rails, broken or loose rungs, steps, rails or braces. Other than that, loose screws, bolts, hinges, and other hardware parts.
- Grease, dirt, or other contaminants that can result to slips or falls.
- Paint or stickers that might hide defects (Warning or safety labels not included).

If a ladder has been identified with defects, it’s best to have it repaired or replaced.

3. Ensure physical capability of using a ladder: A person using a

ladder should be someone who has the capability of carrying out physical tasks. Physical capability is usually measured by one's grip strength, walking speed, chair rising, and standing balance times. Employers should train workers to recognize ladder-related hazards to minimize accidents.

4. Set up the ladder on a flat and stable surface: Ladders should be placed on a firm and level surface for stability. The surface should be able to support the weight of the ladder and the person using it. In any case that the ground is soft, devices such as leg levelers, anti-slip gutter guards, wide boards, or stabilizers can be used.

5. Set up in a safe place: It is important to be mindful of the surroundings when setting up a ladder. The surrounding area should be uncluttered and free of obstructions. If a ladder needs to be set up in a driveway or passageway, barriers and signages, or a person assisting should be present.

6. Never lean or reach away from the ladder: Leaning and reaching away when in the ladder makes it unstable and puts the person in the ladder at risk of falling. To prevent falls, descend and then move the ladder.

7. Always maintain a three point of contact: When climbing or descending the ladder, the three points of contact should be observed for a secure handhold on the ladder. The three points of contact refers to two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand.

8. Only take small items up or down a ladder: Always consider the load limits of the ladder in use. Carrying anything larger or heavier than what the ladder can take will make it unstable. The person in the ladder will be unable to maintain a three point of contact resulting to a fall and injury.

9. Apply the 1:4 rule: When using leaning ladders like an extension ladder, the position of the ladder should be angled at a ratio of 1:4. The base of the ladder being 1 meter away from the structure for every meter height of 4.

10. Climb down cautiously: Remain facing the ladder while maintaining the three points of contact when dissenting the ladder. Do it slowly; avoiding any sudden movements.

MUNICIPALITY LADDERS SAFETY TAKEAWAY

Municipalities should implement ladder safety programs that include training for workers who use ladders, regular inspections and maintenance of ladders, and proper ladder selection for the job at hand. Employers should also ensure that workers have access to appropriate personal protective equipment, such as hard hats, safety glasses, and fall protection gear.

FINAL WORD

To prevent ladder accidents in a municipal setting, it is important to provide workers with proper training on ladder safety, ensure that ladders are regularly inspected and maintained, and enforce strict safety regulations for ladder use.