Ladder Safety – Landscaping Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Landscape workers make constant use of ladders in their work operations to the point where safety for these landscape workers is not given the top priority.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

Landscape workers often use ladders on uneven ground, which increases their risk for accidents. Injuries from ladders include head injuries, fractured bones, sprains and strains, as well as cuts and bruises.

Common hazards include the following:

- Falls from ladders
- Ladders tipping over or collapsing
- Fingers being caught in pinch points when setting up or storing ladders

Incident examples

- A worker was standing on a ladder pruning a hedge and reached too far. The ladder tipped over and she fell, fracturing her skull on the concrete walkway below.
- A young worker was carrying tools and not holding on to the ladder. He fell from the second and third steps of the 2-m (6-ft.) stepladder to the ground, fracturing his spine.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Initial Ladder Safety Checklist

Before you Start

- Choose the right type of ladder for the job (for example, a stepladder, an extension ladder, or an orchard ladder). Choose a non-conductive ladder (for example, wood or fiberglass) if there is a possibility of contact with electrical wires.
- Check for any defects, such as broken rungs, loose bolts, or split rails. If you find any defects, don't use the ladder. Tag it so others will know that it is damaged.
- Make sure rungs are clean and dry before using the ladder.
- Place the ladder so that the feet are on solid, level ground. Use boards under the feet to level and stabilize the ladder, if necessary.
- When using a ladder in a passageway or near a doorway, make sure warning signs are in place for pedestrian traffic.
- Avoid placing a ladder in front of a door. If this is not possible, secure the door so it can't be opened inadvertently.

On the Job

- When climbing the ladder, always face it and maintain three-point contact (two hands and one foot, or one hand and two feet).
- Don't carry heavy or bulky items up or down the ladder.
- Don't stand on the top two rungs of any ladder.
- Keep your body between the ladder rails.
- To move a ladder, get down and then move it.

Final Ladder Safety Checklist

1. Inspect all ladders before use. Do not use any ladders with missing safety feet, missing or broken rungs, etc. Tag defective ladders with a "DO NOT USE" sign and report the defects immediately.
2. Portable ladders should be placed so that the base is away from the horizontal plane by one-fourth the ladder length (i.e. 12 ft ladder would be 3 ft from the wall).
3. Never climb a ladder that is unstable.
4. Never place a ladder in front of a door, unless the door is locked, guarded, or otherwise blocked.

5. All ladders placed up against a stationary object must be tied off at the top to a secure point.
6. Ladders must extend at least three feet beyond the step off point.
7. Do not place a ladder close to live electrical wiring or against piping.
8. Beware of overhead wires when moving an extended ladder.
9. Do not use metal ladders near electrical power lines.
10. Portable ladders must be equipped with non-slip bases.
11. Face the ladder when ascending or descending.
12. Always use the correct ladder for the job (i.e. do not use a stepladder when the job calls for an extension ladder or use a 4 ft ladder when a 6 ft should be used, etc.).

Responsibilities of Employers

- Maintain and repair ladders.
- Train workers on the safe use of ladders before they start work.
- Show workers how to check, set up, and use ladders, including maintaining three-point contact.
- Provide adequate supervision after training.

FINAL WORD

Ladder safety use is encapsulated in four steps: Do not stand on the top two steps; keep hips and shoulders over the center of the ladder; keep the areas around the base and top of the ladder clear of obstructions; push the ladder feet firmly into the ground.