Ladder Safety, Rung By Rung

A ladder is an essential workplace tool for anyone working above ground level. However, each year more than half a million people are injured while using ladders.

Anyone who uses the wrong ladder for a job or uses it inappropriately is courting trouble. Don’t become a statistic. Remember these ladder safety tips:

- Select the correct ladder. Why waver on the top rung of a stepladder when you can use an extension ladder? Never use a metal ladder if there’s any chance of contacting electricity.
- Never assume a ladder is safe. Check it for unsafe footing, broken steps, bent legs, bent supports, cracks, worn or slippery step treads, and worn or missing rubber feet. Don’t use it if there’s a problem.
- Set the ladder up on flooring that is dry, even and clear of obstacles. Never lean the ladder against anything unstable (such as a stack of boxes) or place it in front of an unguarded or unlocked door.
- Follow the belt buckle rule when using a stepladder, making sure your belt buckle goes no higher than the top step of the ladder. Climb the ladder only after ensuring the frame is locked securely in place.
- Follow the four-to-one rule when setting up an extension ladder. Place the ladder with its base one foot away from the wall for every four feet in height. Secure the ladder to a stable object at the top and then lock the extension securely in place. Never stand on the top two steps of an extension ladder.
- Ask a spotter to hold the base of the ladder while you climb and be especially careful when climbing a ladder on a windy day. Remember to fasten the top of the ladder securely to prevent it from tipping.
- Ascend and descend the ladder facing the rungs with both hands on the edges. Hoist tools and materials only after you

have reached the top of the ladder.
- Take precautions to prevent a fall. Use both hands when climbing and never climb onto a ladder that’s already supporting one person.

Ladder safety should never be a stretch. Most of us know when we are doing something that’s not safe when we climb a ladder. If it feels wrong, it is wrong. Get down before you fall down.