Ladder Use Meeting kit

Ladders are one of the leading sources of workplace injury. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) report eight-in-10 construction injuries treated in emergency rooms nationwide involve ladders. Most ladder injuries are the result of falls. Either a worker loses balance and falls off a ladder, or it’s unstable and tips over with a worker on it.

COMMON CAUSES OF LADDER FALLS

Unsafe actions when using a ladder

People often do not follow the safe work practices when using ladders. Standing on the top step of a ladder is a common and deadly practice. Other actions like climbing up a ladder carrying objects, leaning to reach for something, and attempting to move the ladder while still on it are some common practices that lead to injuries.

No inspection prior to use– Problems such as cracked or broken rungs, loose bolts, non-approved fixes, etc. lead to injuries.

Not using the correct ladder– People will often use the same ladder for many different jobs and situations. Choosing a ladder that is too short for the job is often a problem that leads to an injury. Also choosing a ladder not stable enough for the ground conditions or one that is not rated properly for the job are issues that can lead to injury.

Other common causes of ladder injuries

- mounting or dismounting the ladder improperly;
- losing one’s balance;
- failing to set up the ladder properly;
- over-reaching while on the ladder; and
- Mis-stepping while climbing or descending.

WHAT EMPLOYEES NEED TO DO

The first step toward ladder safety is choosing the right ladder for the job. And, the right ladder isn't just the first one available or easiest one to carry.

If power lines are nearby, trade the aluminum ladder for a non-conductive one with wooden or fiberglass sides. Should an aluminum ladder come in contact with live power lines it immediately energizes. Workers are at risk of electrocution.

FIRM FOUNDATION REQUIREMENT

No matter what kind of ladder you're using, place the base on a firm, solid surface and avoid slippery, wet or soft surfaces.

GENERAL SAFETY TIPS WHEN WORKERS USE LADDERS

#1 – Select the length carefully.

Depending on the type of work you are doing, you don't want a ladder that is too short or too long because it can cause you to fall or lose your balance.

#2 – Select the type of ladder carefully.

If you are doing roofing work, you may need an extended ladder. However, for other types of work, a straight ladder will be better. You'll also want to pay close attention to what material(s) the ladder is made out of. You may like it that one ladder is lighter and easier to carry, but it may not be safe to use for heavy duty work. If you are unsure, always consult an expert.

#3 – Know the carrying capacity of the ladder.

The total weight of a ladder is significantly greater when you're climbing it (especially with equipment/tools/clothing). Therefore,

when selecting your ladder, look for one whose maximum carrying capacity matches what you'll need.

WHAT EMPLOYEES NEED TO DO TO USE A LADDER SAFELY

After choosing the right ladder, inspect it to make sure it's in good working condition. If the inspection shows any defects, take the ladder out of service and tag it as damaged. When putting the ladder in place, follow these rules:

- Extend the ladder three feet above the landing—the 3-foot rule.
- Move the base of the ladder out one foot for every four feet of ladder height—the 4-to-1 rule.
- When climbing a ladder, always maintain three points of contact. Use a tool belt to carry tools up the ladder, rather than holding anything in your hands.
- Keep the area around the top and base of the ladder clear. Avoid running hoses, extension cords, or ropes on a ladder as these may cause obstructions.
- Do not lean to one side on the ladder. If something is out of reach, climb down and move the ladder to the right spot. Also, never tie ladders together or place on boxes, buckets, or other objects to get extra height.

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. Using a ladder improperly causes many accidents resulting in injuries and even death.