Use Ladders Safely

What’s at Stake

Using a ladder is a safer alternative to using a makeshift climbing device or an improvised work platform. However, using a ladder incorrectly can result in serious, even fatal injuries.

What’s the Danger

Broken bones and head injuries are common results of falls involving ladders. In addition, workers are sometimes electrocuted when a ladder contacts an electrical circuit.

Example

Many types of ladders are available and each is designed to do a certain kind of work. There are stepladders made for industrial, commercial and household use. There are single ladders, sectional ladders, extension ladders and rolling ladders. Ladders may be made of wood, fiberglass or metal, and they may be portable or fixed.

How to Protect Yourself

- Make sure you use the best ladder for the job. It should be the right design and constructed of the right material.
- Do not use the ladder for any purposes other than those recommended by the manufacturer.
- Never use a metal ladder or wire reinforced wood ladder when working near a live electrical conductor.
- The worker and the materials on the ladder should not exceed the recommended load limit.
- Examine the ladder for any defects or damage. Check for looseness between the rungs and the siderails, and check moving parts and bindings for too much play. Check for split or cracked wood, corroded metal and frayed ropes.

- Wooden ladders should not be painted because this can hide defects; instead, they should be coated with a clear lacquer.
- If you find a problem with the ladder, immediately withdraw it from service so it can be repaired or destroyed. Tag it “Do Not Use.”
- Position the ladder correctly, the way it was designed to be used. Place the base on a solid, non-slip surface. Both of the rails should be supported at the top unless the ladder is designed to be used with a single support attachment.
- A straight ladder should be set up using the four-to-one rule. For every four feet that goes up in height, the base of the ladder should be placed one foot away from the wall.
- Use both hands while climbing. Do not carry tools or materials in your hands; carry small tools in a belt and use a hoist for larger items.

Final Word

Ladders are also common in our homes, used for construction, painting, pruning and cleaning projects. Follow these tips to use them safely.