Syracuse Builders Exchange
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BIE SAFETY ADVISOR

March is National Ladder Safety Month

Almost every home in the United Sates has one, and chances are you have used one personally either at work or at home. From changing out a lightbulb to getting on top of a roof, ladders are a common piece of equipment used in almost every home or building and appear to be harmless — and yet according to Injury Facts, thousands of people are killed due to falls from a ladder or scaffolding work. In fact, falls are the second leading cause of death next to highway crashes.

Understanding the different types of ladders as well as safe ladder practices are key to preventing falls and other potential injuries.

Here are some helpful tips to always keep in mind when using a ladder provided by OSHA:

- ✓ Read and follow all labels/markings on the ladder.
- ✓ Avoid electrical hazards! – Look for overhead power lines before handling a ladder. Avoid using a metal ladder near power lines or exposed energized electrical equipment.
- ✓ Always inspect the ladder prior to using it. If the ladder is damaged, it must be removed from service and tagged until repaired or discarded.
- ✓ Always maintain a 3-point (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand) contact on the ladder when climbing. Keep your body near the middle of the step and always face the ladder while climbing.
- ✓ Only use ladders and appropriate accessories (ladder levelers, jacks or hooks) for their designed purposes.
- ✓ Ladders must be free of any slippery material on the rungs, steps or feet.
- ✓ Do not use a self-supporting ladder (e.g., step ladder) as a single ladder or in a partially closed position.
- ✓ Do not use the top step/rung of a ladder as a step/rung unless it was designed for that purpose.
- ✓ Use a ladder only on a stable and level surface, unless it has been secured (top or bottom) to prevent displacement.
- ✓ Do not place a ladder on boxes, barrels or other unstable bases to obtain additional height.
- ✓ Do not move or shift a ladder while a person or equipment is on the ladder.
- ✓ An extension or straight ladder used to access an elevated surface must extend at least 3 feet above the point of support. Do not stand on the three top rungs of a straight, single or extension ladder.
- ✓ The proper angle for setting up a ladder is to place its base a quarter of the working length of the ladder from the wall or other vertical surface.
- ✓ A ladder placed in any location where it can be displaced by other work activities must be secured to prevent displacement or a barricade must be erected to keep traffic away from the ladder.
- ✓ Be sure that all locks on an extension ladder are properly engaged.
- ✓ Do not exceed the maximum load rating of a ladder. Be aware of the ladder's load rating and of the weight it is supporting, including the weight of any tools or equipment.

While some of these dos and don'ts may seem obvious, it's important to keep things in perspective. According to National Ladder Safety Month, every year over 100 people die in ladder-related accidents, and thousands suffer disabling injuries.

The good news, however, is that ladder safety is becoming a key safety topic among employees in the construction industry. Don't miss the 2023 Ladder Safety Webinar Series scheduled by National Ladder Safety Month for spreading the news about the safety dangers ladders can create and how to work safely both on and around ladders.

It is important to remember that ladder-related injuries and fatalities are completely preventable.

Information for this document Provided by OSHA, American Ladder Institute
Prepared & edited by Michael Ballantine; Occupational Safety Consultants WWW.WORKRISKFREE.COM

Monthly Toolbox Talk

Ladder Inspections

Inspect Ladders Carefully!

All ladders must be inspected for defects and/or damage periodically by a competent person, and after any occurrence that could affect their safe use.

Ladder users must inspect ladders before each use, and defective and/or damaged ladders must either be immediately marked in a manner that readily identifies them as defective/damaged, or be tagged with a "Do Not Use" tag or tag containing similar language. Defective and/or damaged ladders must not be used and must be removed from service until repaired.

Look for warning signs. Check all ladder components for signs of wear, corrosion and structural failure before each use. These inspections should include:

- ✓ Rungs - Check for broken split, cracked, corroded or missing rungs.
- ✓ Side Rails - Check for broken, split, cracked, corroded or missing side rails.
- ✓ Cracks - Check carefully for cracks; they are hard to see. Cracks weaken ladders.
- ✓ Excessive Bends - Check for rungs or side rails with excessive bends. Bent areas are greatly weakened and may fail during use.
- ✓ Hardware - Check for ladders with loose, corroded, or weakened fasteners and hardware.
- ✓ Feet - Check ladders for missing or damaged feet. Ladder feet may have both non-skid pads for use on hard surfaces (concrete), and metal feet for soft surfaces (dirt).
- ✓ Coatings or Paint - Check for paint or other coating hiding defects. Wood ladders shall not be painted or coated with any opaque covering, except for identification or warning labels which may be placed on one face only of a side rail. When other types of ladders are painted it is very hard for the user to observe defects/damage such as cracks or dents and painted areas must be inspected carefully for hidden damage.
- ✓ Oil, grease, and other slipping hazards - Inspect ladders for oil, grease, moisture or other slippery materials before use and clean as necessary.
- ✓ Capacity - Check the capacity label and make sure the ladder has sufficient capacity to hold you and everything you are wearing/carrying.