

Safety Tips from the WorkSafe People

Ladders

Ladder accidents happen when the wrong ladder is selected for the job, when it is not inspected before use, or when the operator is careless.

Potential Hazards

- Poor condition of the ladder
- Improper selection
- Improper use
- Substituting other objects, such as chairs, boxes or pails for ladders

Identifying Hazards

- Inspect each ladder before use. Check for the following:
 - Steps and rungs are all in place, intact and free from grease or oil
 - Support braces, bolts and screws are tight and in place
 - Metal parts are lubricated
 - Rope is not worn or frayed
 - Locking device or spreaders are in place
 - Safety feet are in place
 - Metal ladders are not dented or bent
- If the ladder has any defects, tag it out and remove it from service

Ladder Selection

- Select the ladder to be used based on the type of work that will be done
- Review weight limits — remember, they include you and any equipment you will carry
 - **I-A** (heavy duty) holds 300 pounds
 - **I** (heavy duty) holds 250 pounds
 - **II** (medium duty) holds 225 pounds
 - **III** (light) holds 200 pounds (generally not used on the job, **only for home use**)
- Review maximum ladder length limits
 - Stepladder: 20 feet high
 - One-section ladder: 30 feet high
 - Extension ladder: 60 feet high with section overlap

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Ladder Setup

- Place the ladder on a level surface
- Ensure that the safety feet at the base of the straight/extension ladder are in position to prevent the ladder from slipping
 - If the surface is soft, place wide boards under the ladder
- Set the feet parallel with the surface the ladder will rest against
- Extend the ladder so there is at least 3 feet above the top support
- Anchor the top and have someone hold the bottom, or tie it securely
- Do not rest the ladder on a window
- Position the ladder in front of a door only if the door is locked and cannot be opened
- Position the ladder base from the wall approximately one-fourth the length of the ladder
- Position an extension ladder before it is extended