

Army *Safety* Gram

Leading on the Edge for Safety Excellence

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Ladder Safety

Many work site injuries are caused by accidents involving ladders that are not placed or used safely. With the right ladder and proper use, working above ground level should be no problem. Make sure you have an appropriate ladder and use correct technique for placement and climbing.

Common Causes of Ladder Accidents

Like most accidents, ladder related accidents are preventable. With a bit of thought and some knowledge, these accidents can be predicted and prevented. Common causes of ladder accidents are:

- ♦ Over-reaching from ladders, rather than moving them.
- ♦ Standing ladders on boxes, etc., to gain additional height.
- ♦ Too much haste in climbing or descending.
- ♦ Climbing one-handed while carrying something in the other hand.
- ♦ Standing at the very top of a short ladder, rather than getting one long enough for the job.
- ♦ Hanging tools from ladder rungs, or leaving tools on the top of the stepladder.
- ♦ Throwing tools to a fellow worker on a ladder.
- ♦ Placing the ladder at an improper angle.
- ♦ Using metal ladders in locations where contact with electric wires is possible.
- ♦ Using worn or damaged ladders.
- ♦ Failure to secure (tie) the ladder in place.



Ladder Safety Tips

The safest way to climb indoors and out is to use a safe and sturdy ladder. Before using any ladder, check its condition. Make sure there are no broken, cracked, or missing rails and that rungs are not slippery from grease or oil. Check for damage or corrosion on metal ladders. If a ladder is in poor condition, don't use it. Whether you're using a ladder at work or at home the same basic ladder safety rules apply:

- ♦ Always use a sturdy ladder when climbing; it's too risky to climb on a chair.
- ♦ Before using a ladder outdoors, choose a location that is well away from all power lines. Coming in contact with live wires can be fatal.
- ♦ Place the ladder on level ground and open it completely, making sure all locks are engaged.
- ♦ Use the 4-to-1 rule for extension ladders: for each 4 feet of distance between the ground and the upper point of contact (such as the wall or roof), move the base of the ladder out 1 foot.
- ♦ Always face the ladder when climbing and wear slip-resistant shoes, such as those with rubber soles.
- ♦ Keep your body centered on the ladder and gauge your safety by your belt buckle. If your buckle passes beyond the ladder rail, you are overreaching and at risk for falling.
 - ♦ Make sure rungs are dry before using the ladder.
 - ♦ Stand at or below the highest safe standing level on a ladder. For a stepladder, the safe standing level is the second rung from the top, and for an extension ladder, it's the fourth rung from the top.



Ladders are a pretty simple type of equipment. Don't allow that simplicity to get in the way of following safe procedures.