



Ladder Safety Tips

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) there are more than 164,000 emergency room-treated injuries relating to ladders each year. The CPSC suggests the following safety precautions to help prevent these injuries.

- Make sure the weight your ladder is supporting does not exceed its maximum load rating (user plus materials). There should only be one person on the ladder at one time
- Use a ladder that is the proper length for the job. Proper length is a minimum of 3 feet extending over the roofline or working surface. The three top rungs of a straight, single or extension ladder should not be stood on
- Straight, single or extension ladders should be set up at about a 75-degree angle
- All metal ladders should have slip-resistant feet
- Metal ladders will conduct electricity. Use a wooden or fiberglass ladder in the vicinity of power lines or electrical equipment. Do not let a ladder made from any material contact live electric wires
- Be sure all locks on extension ladders are properly engaged
- The ground under the ladder should be level and firm. Large flat wooden boards braced under the ladder can level a ladder on uneven ground or soft ground. A good practice is to have a helper hold the bottom of the ladder
- Do not place a ladder in front of a door that is not locked, blocked or guarded
- Keep your body centered between the rails of the ladder at all times. Do not lean too far to the side while working
- Do not use a ladder for any purpose other than that for which it was intended
- Do not step on the top step, bucket shelf or attempt to climb or stand on the rear section of a stepladder
- Never leave a raised ladder unattended
- Follow use instruction labels on ladders

Additional information from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) suggests:

Choose the Right Ladder: Only choose ladders with the UL seal from Underwriter's Laboratory. Type I, IA and IAA are most appropriate for use in nonprofit facilities.

There are several types of ladders the most common portable variety are stepladders and straight ladders. It is important to know how to select the right one for the particular job. Stepladders are freestanding, and rest four "feet" on the floor or ground. Among their uses are ceiling painting, changing light bulbs in a ceiling fixture, reaching items on a high shelf, and clipping shrubbery. They are safest if they are 10 feet or less in length, and should never be longer than 20 feet.

Straight or extension ladders, generally heavier, are called for when the work to be done is at a higher level, as in painting, or when staff must step from the ladder to a surface such as a roof. Extension ladders generally can provide for climbing up to 44 feet (beyond that, scaffolds should be used). They have two feet on the ground (or floor) and lean against a vertical surface—like a wall, the edge of a roof, or a tree.

Both kinds of ladders can be made of wood, metal, or fiberglass. Wooden ladders are more readily damaged; metal ladders should be avoided when working near electrical wires or equipment; fiberglass can be weakened by high heat. Federal, state and even local regulations may apply to which type of ladders may be used at your facility.

Maintaining Ladders: Inspect ladders regularly. Stepladders and extension ladders should be inspected for broken or frozen joints or latches. Aluminum ladders should be inspected for cracks and broken welds. Aluminum ladders should also be inspected for rough spots and burrs before first use. Wood ladders should be inspected for cracked wood, splinters, and rot. Look for broken or loose hardware. Protect wood ladders with linseed oil or clear sealant. Never paint a wooden ladder - the paint may hide imperfections such as rot or cracks. Fiberglass ladders are protected with a clear sealant. If the fiberglass is damaged through the sealant, sand lightly before applying another coat of lacquer.

More information about safety is available in the [Online Resource Library](#).