

Keys to Ladder Safety

Ladders can be a great help on the job. They're simple to use and get you where you need to be. Although ladders are uncomplicated devices, they can be dangerous. It's important to know and follow ladder safety guidelines.

Choose the Right Ladder for the Job

- Make sure your ladder's strong enough and long enough for the job.
- Check the ladder's duty rating and don't exceed its limits. Type I, an industrial ladder, holds 250 pounds. Type II holds up to 225 pounds. Type III, the household ladder, holds up to 200 pounds.
- Remember to consider the weight of your tools when selecting a ladder.
- If you work around electrical wires or power lines, use a wooden or nonconductive fiberglass ladder, not metal.
- Never connect two short ladders to form a long one.

Inspect Your Ladder Before You Use It

- Check for loose or bent rungs, cracked side rails or bent or missing parts.
- Make sure the spreaders can be locked in place when opened.
- Metal ladders should have plastic or rubber feet and step coverings.
- Check for oil and grease on the rungs which could cause you to slip.
- Replace missing parts and tighten loose hardware.
- Avoid repairing major structural damage. Instead, get a new ladder.
- Make sure the steps are wide enough for you to spread your feet for balance.

Set Up Your Ladder Carefully

- Place your ladder on a firm, level surface with its feet parallel to the wall it's resting against.
- Use the 4-to-1 ladder rule: Set the base of your ladder 1 foot away from the wall for every 4 feet of ladder height.
- In busy areas, use a barricade to prevent collisions.
- Lock nearby doors that could open toward you.
- Always tie off your ladder. Lash straight ladders at the top and bottom.
- The top of a straight ladder should extend 3 feet beyond its resting point.
- Carry your ladder vertically, or use two people—one at each end.

Climb Cautiously

- Face the ladder when you climb up or down.
- Hold on to the side rails with both hands.
- Carry only necessary tools on your belt.
- Use a rope to raise heavier equipment.
- Never overreach.
- Use the "belt buckle" rule. Always keep your body centered between the rails.
- Always wear a safety harness if you're climbing more than 6 feet off the ground.
- Allow only one person on a ladder at a time.
- Wear shoes with nonskid soles.
- Make sure your hands are dry and free of grease.
- Never step on the top two rungs of a ladder.
- Never use a ladder for anything other than its intended purpose.

