

Working at Heights – General Ladder Safety

The use of ladders can prevent serious falls and accidents. For this reason, employees must follow proper safety practices when using ladders. If ladders are maintained and utilized properly, additional fall protection measures are generally not necessary.

- Inspect all ladders prior to use. Check for loose steps or rungs, cracked or split steps or side rails, loose or bent hinges, missing ladder feet, etc. All defective ladders shall be marked “defective” and removed from service.
- Make sure the ladder is free of oil, grease, or other slippery hazards.
- Use ladders on stable and level surfaces only.
- If using a step ladder, make sure it is securely spread open. Never use a folding step ladder in an unfolded position.
- Make sure the ladder is securely fixed at both the top and the foot so that it cannot move from its top or bottom points of rest. If the ladder cannot be secured at the top and bottom, then securely fix it at the base. If this is not possible, have someone stand at the base of the ladder and secure it manually against slipping.
- When using an extension ladder, the base to height ratio should be placed at approximately 1 to 4.
- Ladders used to reach a walking surface or roof must extend at least 3 feet beyond the landing surface.
- Always face the ladder when ascending or descending.
- You must maintain three points of contact at all times while climbing. Carry tools in a tool belt, pouch or holster, not in your hands, so you can keep hold of the ladder.
- Do not stand on the top two steps of a step ladder.
- Do not try to reach so far above you or to either side that you lose your balance; instead, move the ladder.
- When you are using a hand to pull up equipment or supplies, all material should be securely attached to the line.
- No one should be permitted to stand, walk or work under a ladder while it is in use.
- When using “A” frame trestle ladders, never extend them beyond twenty feet or manufacturer’s recommendation.
- Always lock or chock the wheels to prevent any rolling or instability.**