

Toolbox Talks

BASIC LADDER SAFETY

Ladders, both fixed and portable, are used safely across production every day without incident, but the improper selection, use, and care of a ladder can result in unnecessary accidents and injuries.

LADDER ACCIDENTS

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2020, there were over 22,000 reported ladder accidents in the United States. The 3 most common causes of ladder accidents are:

- 1) Using the wrong ladder for the job.
- 2) Using a ladder that is in poor condition.
- 3) Using the ladder improperly.

LADDER PROTECTION PROCEDURES

Most of these accidents are preventable with proper ladder safety:

Choose the right ladder: Select the appropriate ladder for the task at hand. Consider the ladder's height, weight capacity, and material. Avoid using a metal ladder near energized electrical equipment. Never use a ladder that is too short or too tall for the job. Only use a ladder for how it was designed to be used. Never use an A-frame ladder when an extension ladder is needed.

Inspect the ladder: Before using the ladder, inspect it thoroughly for any signs of damage or wear. Check for cracks, loose or missing parts, and stability. Ensure that all locks are working and fully engaged before using the ladder. If any issues are found, DO NOT USE the ladder, remove it from service, and notify the supervisor or Department Head.

Review Manufacturers' Information/Receive training: If it is unclear on how to use a specific type of ladder, ask the supervisor or Department Head for instruction. Take a moment to review the manufacturer's warning label(s) affixed to the ladder.

Set up on a stable surface: Place the ladder on a firm and level surface. Avoid using ladders on uneven or slippery ground. If necessary, use ladder levelers or stabilizers to ensure a stable base.

Maintain three points of contact: When climbing the ladder, always maintain three points of contact with the ladder – either two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand. This provides stability and minimizes the risk of falling.

Never carry a load: Never carry tools or materials by hands when going up or down the ladder. Instead, use a tool belt, put them in a sack that hangs from a strap over the shoulder, use a bucket and rope to raise and lower them, or ask for assistance.

Don't overreach: Avoid leaning too far to one side while on the ladder. It's tempting to overreach to grab something, but it can lead to loss of balance and falling. Instead, climb down, reposition the ladder, and then continue the task. Never use the top step or cap on a stepladder as a step.

Store it safely: When finished using a ladder be sure it is free of oils, greases, or other slippery materials, and store the ladder safely to ensure it cannot fall or create some other safety hazard. If the ladder was damaged during use, report the damage immediately to the supervisor or Department Head.

CONCLUSION

Although ladders are a useful, simple tool, be mindful of the thousands of injuries caused every year by improper selection, use, and care. If there are any questions about ladder safety, speak with the supervisor or Department Head.