

SAFETY ALERT

**BE CAREFUL
UP THERE.**

Ladder Safety Q & A

Q. When setting up a ladder to access an upper level or a roof, do I need to tie off the top of the ladder?

- A. If you are following “best practices”, and if the ladder is going to be there for any extended period, then you should tie off the top of the ladder for stability. The ladder should be tied off so that there is no horizontal displacement.

Q. What is the proper angle when setting up a ladder?

- A. Place the ladder feet so that the horizontal distance between the feet and the top support is 1/4 of the working length of the ladder. The working length is the distance between the very bottom of the ladder and the landing.

Q. Can I have more than one person on a ladder at the same time?

- A. Don't allow more than one person at a time on either a step ladder or extension ladder.

Q. How far should an extension ladder extend beyond the landing?

- A. 3 feet of extension to provide a proper grab rail for mounting and dismounting the ladder.

Q. How often should I be inspecting my ladders and what should I be looking for specifically in a ladder inspection?

- A. Employees using ladders should be inspecting them before each use for and defects such as, missing or broken steps or rungs (they are loose or broken if you can move them by hand); broken or damaged side rails; damaged or worn non-slip feet; loose nails, screws, bolts or nuts; loose or faulty spreaders, locks, and other metal parts in poor repair; corroded components; bent or damaged components; and rot, decay or warped rails on wooden ladders. Also, ladders must be free of any grease or other slippery material on the rungs, steps or feet. Do not use ladder if any of these conditions exist.

Q. What precautions should I be aware of when working with ladders around electrical hazards?

- A. There are many different types of ladders and they are made of different materials. Metal ladders should never be used when dealing with electricity. Always choose a ladder with non-conductive side rails. Stay at least 10 feet away from power lines.

Q. When should I choose a Step Ladder vs. an Extension Ladder?

- A. Extension ladders are a good choice for higher places that you need to access like a rooftop. Step ladders are a better choice for lower places that you need to access and also places where there is not a good place to lean up and support an extension ladder. Also, never fold up a step ladder and use it like an extension ladder.

Q. Can I carry tools or other materials up and/or down a ladder?

- A. No, you should always maintain at least a 3 point contact when ascending or descending a ladder. Materials can be properly hoisted up so that employees can maintain this proper 3 point contact.

Q. What is the proper way to use a ladder in a busy area with people walking by or around the ladder?

- A. Ladders placed in any location where they can be displaced by workplace activities or traffic, such as passageways, doorways, or driveways, shall be secured to prevent accidental displacement, OR a barricade shall be used to keep the activities or traffic away from the ladder.

Q. What is the highest that you should climb on a Step Ladder?

- A. You should never stand or sit on the very top or the top rung of a step ladder.

Q. How far can a person safely lean on a ladder in order to reach their work?

- A. People on ladders should follow the “Belt Buckle” rule. In other words, never lean far enough that your belt buckle would extend beyond the side rail. If a person needs to lean more than this, then they should climb down and move the ladder.

Q. What is the proper way to ascend and descend a ladder?

- A. A person shall always face the ladder when ascending or descending, and always maintain at least a 3-point contact.

Q. How many points of contact should a person have with a ladder at all times?

- A. You should always maintain at least a 3-point contact when ascending or descending a ladder. Materials should be properly hoisted up so that employees can maintain this proper 3-point contact.

Q. What are the different duty ratings of ladders?

- A. Type IA (*Extra Heavy Duty*) 300 pounds
Type I (*Heavy Duty*) 250 pounds
Type II (*Medium Duty*) 225 pounds
Type III (*Light Duty*) 200 pounds
(*Not allowed on jobsites*)

Q. Where can I find more information on Ladder Safety?

- A. Subpart X of 29 CFR 1926, which can be found at www.osha.gov. There are 3 ANSI Standards on ladders which are ANSI A14.1 (Portable Wood Ladders), ANSI A14.2 (Portable Metal Ladders), and ANSI A14.5 (Portable Reinforced Plastic Ladders). Also, make sure to follow all of the manufacturer's recommendations when using ladders.