

## Toolbox Talk # 15.01 – Ladders

Tragedies like fatal falls can happen from a ten-foot ladder or a normal staircase. But you can prevent falls that could cause injuries or death by choosing ladders carefully, inspecting ladders and stairways, using them properly, and keeping them in good shape.

Ladders are fixed (cannot be moved) or portable (movable). When choosing a portable ladder, consider:

- Type (step ladder, straight, or extension ladders).
- Length (convenient height without reaching).
- Strength (base your choice on weight and stress the ladder has to bear).
- Material (wood is nonconductive, heavy, hard to move, and rots; metal is light, weather-resistant, but conducts electricity; and fiberglass is light, long-lasting, nonconductive, and has good traction).

In addition, inspect ladders before using them. Also, all ladders should be thoroughly inspected at regular intervals. When inspecting, look for:

- Loose, broken, or missing rungs, steps, cleats or siderails.
- Missing safety feet, frayed ropes, and other defective parts.
- Oil, grease, or other slippery substances on rungs.
- Skid-resistant features on rungs or steps of metal ladders.
- Operational movable parts.

For stairway inspections, look for loose or missing treads/stairs/handrails and clutter.

Don't use damaged ladders. Instead, label the damage, and then repair or destroy the ladder as appropriate.

Do NOT use other means to reach higher places (i.e., chairs, benches, or boxes). If the job calls for a ladder, take the time to find one. Use ladders safely as follows:

**Placement** — Don't place ladder in horizontal position. Place ladder away from doors.

**Footing support** — Place ladder on sure footing (not boxes or blocks), securing when possible. Place ladder so that for every four feet up, the ladder's base is one foot out.

**Top support** — Top of ladder is placed so rails are fully supported. Extra room is given in case of ladder shifting. Ample strength is provided for load applied to ladder. Top support point is rigid.

**Ladder height** — Ladder siderails are at least 3 ft above the support point. Do not stand on top 2 steps of stepladder or top 4 rungs of straight ladder.

**Ladder extension** — Raise extension ladders so upper section overlaps and rests on bottom section.

**Electrical hazards** — Keep metal ladders away from power lines. Take precautions as you would when using a metal tool.

**Climbing** — Face ladder. Use both hands. One person at a time on portable ladders. Make sure work shoes are clean. Hoist tools up after reaching the top. When using stairways, don't carry objects, hold the handrail, and keep a sure footing.

Keep stairs dry and clean, free of protruding nails, splinters, holes, or loose boards.

**Toolbox Talk # 15.01 – Ladders**

Project: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Other safety issues covered or comments from crew members:

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Attendees:

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