



# Ladder Safety

We have all worked on or around ladders at some time in our lives. The following tips are intended to make your interaction with ladders less hazardous:

- **Inspect it.** Before using a ladder, check it for faults, such as broken rungs or rails. If it is an extension ladder, inspect the pulleys, ropes and locks for excessive wear. Also, check the footings and pads to make sure they still provide a non-skid surface. If any defect is found, the ladder should be tagged unsafe and taken out of service. If it cannot be fixed, make sure it is disposed of properly.
- **Set it up on solid footing.** When setting up a ladder, make sure the ground it is set upon is level and stable. Do not set the ladder on a muddy surface, which may cause it to slip. Do not use bricks or other material to raise the height of the ladder, which will also make it unstable. If the working surface is not level, use an extension ladder that has adjustable feet attached to each leg to make up for the difference.
- **Choose the right equipment.** The ladder should reach a minimum of 3 feet above the “point of support” and should be secured at this point. If it is not tall enough for this, you are using the wrong ladder.
- **Use the 4:1 rule.** When using extension ladders, abide by the 4:1 rule. This means if you are using a 12-foot ladder, the base should be 3 feet from the structure. Some ladders provide a picture guide on the ladder itself to help you with this ratio. When using a stepladder, make sure the folding cross braces are fully folded out and locked into place before you step onto it.
- **Use the ladder correctly.** Always face the ladder when ascending or descending, and have both hands free to grasp it securely. If you need tools, they should be carried in a tool belt or pulled up with a rope once you have reached your destination. Don’t use a folded stepladder as a straight ladder.
- **3-Point Rule.** Remember to use the “3-Point Rule” when climbing a ladder. At least two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand, should be in contact with the ladder at all times.
- **Stay centered.** Keep your body between the vertical side rails of the ladder. This reduces the chance of tipping over the ladder, or even worse falling off of it.
- **Don’t over climb the ladder.** Do not climb higher than the third rung from the top on straight or extension ladders, or higher than the second tread from the top on stepladders.

By following the above rules, you greatly reduce your chances of being injured while working on ladders. They are a valuable — but potentially unstable — piece of equipment. Take care and be safe!

