



## Toolbox Talk: Ladder Safety

### Introduction/Overview:

We see them everywhere; we use them all the time. While they are useful, they can be deadly. What is this useful but deadly item? The ladder. A line out of a funny, and somewhat cheesy but truthful, Safety Time video, *Of the Various Ways in Which a Ladder Can Kill You*, states, “except when it is stowed the ladder is always trying to kill you!” However, if you follow a few simple precautions and use the proper ladder properly, you will survive unscathed.

### Statistics:

Every year 500,000 people are treated for injuries due to falls from ladders, and approximately 300 of these are fatal; 97 percent occur at home or on farms. Ladders have ranked 7<sup>th</sup> on OSHA’S “Top 10” list of the most cited violations for 2016 and 2017. According to the World Health Organization, the U.S. leads the world in ladder deaths. Most deaths from ladders are from falls of 10 feet or less.

### Talking Points:

- Read and follow all labels and markings.
- Inspect all ladders before use; do not use if damaged.
- Ensure stepladders are fully opened and spreader bars locked before use.
- The highest permitted standing level on a step ladder is two steps down from the top.
- Never stand on the top cap or the pail shelf of a step ladder.
- Keep the centerline of your body between the side rails. Do not overreach.
- Do not exceed the load limit.
- Ensure the surface you use your ladder on is level and stable.
- Use the 4:1 ratio rule with extension ladders. For every four feet of ladder height, the base should be placed one foot away from the structure.
- Maintain three points of contact when ascending and descending.
- If you use a ladder to access an elevated surface, ensure the ladder extends at least three feet above the point of support and is secured from movement.
- Do not place a ladder on boxes, chairs, or barrels to attain additional height.
- Do not use metal ladders near powerlines or exposed energized electrical equipment.
- Do not place a ladder in front of a closed door.
- Wear slip-resistant footwear that is free of slippery material such as mud or snow.
- Only one person at a time should be on the ladder unless specially designed for more.

Developed by:

## Additional Discussion Notes:

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### Final Thoughts:

Ladders are commonplace, but we should never become complacent in their use. The right ladder, in good working condition, used appropriately can make your task easier and safer.

**NOTE:** Always promote discussion with the attendees. If a question comes up that no one in attendance can answer, please contact OWC or the Loss Control Innovations consultants for assistance.

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### References:

[Top Ladder Companies and Manufacturers](#)

[Thomas for Industry](#)

[Of the Various Ways in Which a Ladder Can Kill You  
Safety Time](#)

[Industrial Safety and Health News](#)

[July 6, 2017](#)

[International Association of Certified Home Inspectors](#)

[Ladder Safety by Nick Gromicko, CMI® and Kenton Shepard](#)

[Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#)

[OSHA Quick Card \*Portable Ladder Safety\*](#)