

Toolbox Talk: Ladder Safety Awareness

Ladders are one of the most common tools used on job sites—and one of the most common sources of workplace injuries. Most ladder incidents occur because of improper setup, damaged equipment, or loss of balance. The good news is that these incidents are highly preventable when ladders are selected, inspected, and used correctly.

Key Ladder Safety Reminders

1. **Inspect Before Use**
 - Inspect ladders before each use.
 - Do not use ladders with cracked rails, missing rungs, loose hardware, or other damage.
 - Ensure labels and load ratings are legible.
2. **Use the Right Ladder**
 - Select the proper ladder type and height for the task.
 - Do not exceed the ladder's load rating (includes worker, tools, and materials).
 - Never use metal ladders near energized electrical equipment or power lines.
3. **Set Up the Ladder Safely**
 - Place ladders on stable, level surfaces.
 - Fully open step ladders and lock spreader bars.
 - For extension ladders, follow the 4:1 rule: for every 4 feet of height, the base should be 1 foot away from the structure.

- When accessing a roof or elevated surface, extend the ladder at least 3 feet above the landing and secure it if possible.
 - Never place ladders on boxes, barrels, or other objects to gain height.
4. **Climb and Work Safely**
 - Maintain three points of contact when climbing.
 - Keep your belt buckle between the side rails to avoid overreaching.
 - Wear slip-resistant footwear free of mud, oil, or snow.
 - Only one person on a ladder at a time, unless it is designed for multiple users.
 5. **Know Where Not to Use Ladders**
 - Do not stand on the top cap or top step of a stepladder.
 - Do not place ladders in front of doors unless the door is locked or guarded.

Bottom Line

Most ladder injuries happen because someone rushed, skipped an inspection, or reached just a little too far. Take a moment to set the ladder correctly and use it properly—it only takes a few seconds and can prevent a serious injury.

