

Toolbox Talks

Step Ladders

Step Ladders are essential pieces of equipment in virtually any municipal work environment. They are used to access lighting when changing bulbs, store/retrieve records and materials from shelving, completing painting projects, vehicle/equipment repairs, etc. When used properly, they seldom pose a hazard to those using them. However, when used improperly they pose a significant hazard that can result in serious injury or even death.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, falls are a leading cause of death with half of those deadly falls resulting from ladder use. Statistics provided by the Bureau of Labor show that in 2015, there were 150 workplace fatalities and over 20,000 non-fatal injuries due to general ladder usage and annually Ladders have been in the OSHA Top Ten list for most cited violations for several years.



So what can be done to prevent a fatality or injury from happening when using a step ladder?

Here are some Do's and Do Not's for safe step ladder use.

DO's . . .

- Inspect your portable step ladder before each and every use, take it out of service if defects (damage) are found.
- Ensure that all four feet of the portable step ladder are set on a level and stable surface, and that the ladder spreaders are fully extended and secured into place before use.
- Keep your ladder, your body, your tools and any materials at least 10 feet away from energized electrical conductors (or even further, 20 feet, for higher voltages exceeding 50kv).
- Make sure that one of your hands is firmly grasping the ladder when you are climbing up or down a ladder. Sliding your hand along the side rails is not grasping the ladder.
- Always stay between the side rails of the ladder, don't overreach outside of the side rails. Move the ladder if needed after you get off of it.
- Review and follow the ladder manufacturer's instructions and warning posted on the labels attached to your portable extension ladder.



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DO NOT's . . .

- Never use a portable step ladder for purposes for which it was not designed. Do not lean a closed portable step ladder against a wall or other surface for the purpose of climbing, or stand on one that has been placed across objects in a horizontal position.
- Do not use a metal portable step ladder or any other conductive materials when working in an area where live electrical components are present. Remember the minimum 10 foot clearance rule!
- Never climb up or down a portable step ladder with materials or tools in your hands. If your hands are full, you cannot properly grasp the ladder and may lose your balance.
- Do not place any tools or materials on the top or any step of your ladder from where it may fall and strike someone below.
- Never stand on the top of a regular portable step ladder, or on the top step. Always follow the ladder manufacturer's rules and warning stickers for proper standing surfaces.

While these are not the only precautions and prohibitions applicable to the use of a portable step ladder, heeding these simple tips can go a long ways towards protecting all of us who do use them from accidents, injuries, and even death.



Stay Safe Out There!!!



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