

March is National Ladder Safety Month

Older adults need to make ladder safety a priority: FALLS FROM LADDERS ARE PREVENTABLE! Each year in the USA, more than 100 people die and thousands are injured from ladder-related falls.

There are **five major causes** for ladder-related fall incidents:

Incorrect extension ladder setup angle. The angle should be about 75 degrees and the top of the ladder should extend at least three feet above the roof or structure edge to reduce the risk of slipping or sliding.

Inappropriate ladder selection. Select a ladder with the appropriate duty-rating and one that is made of non-conductive material to avoid electrocution and related falls.

Insufficient ladder inspection. Practice regular ladder maintenance. Check for missing or loose rungs, bolts, screws, cleats or other components.

Improper ladder use. Do not overreach, carry objects, or apply excessive force. Avoid slips and missteps.

Lack of access to ladder safety tools and information.

Do not use a ladder if you are feeling tired or dizzy. Do not use a damaged ladder. Make sure the ladder is right for the job. Do not use ladders during storms or high winds.

If you are going to use a ladder, consider the following **tips**.

Wear slip-resistant shoes.

Select the right kind of ladder to match the job. Be sure the ladder is the right height. If it is too short, it can lead to overreaching and ladder instability. Consider the ladder material if there is a risk of electrocution.

The duty rating is the maximum amount of weight the ladder is manufactured to carry. This means it can handle the person's weight and any materials being carried. An overweight ladder can structurally fail.

Position the ladder in a safe location. This is on a level, supportive surface without contaminants. Place the ladder in a low traffic area or put barriers around it to prevent a person or equipment from bumping into it.

Never step above the second highest rung on a step ladder.

Never step above the fourth highest rung on an extension ladder.

Maintain three points of contact. This can be two hands and one foot or one hand and two feet. Maintain a firm grip and do not have your hands distracted with other materials. Use a tool belt or other means to get your materials to an elevated work surface.

When you are climbing a ladder, your belt buckle should be inside the rails. This will enable you to maintain your center of balance. If you can reach with your body inside the rails, stop and move the ladder.

Use a podium ladder with guard rails on which your waist can serve as the third point of contact.

The number one incident that leads to many injuries is missing the last step. Take your time climbing down and step down onto the ground.

For additional information on ladder safety, download the NIOSH Ladder safety phone app.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) NIOSH and laddersafetymonth.com