



# DID YOU *Know?*

## Climbing Toward Safety A Practical Guide to Ladder Safety

Ladders are staples on construction sites, relied on for everything from simple repairs to complex installations. Yet, they're also a leading cause of workplace injuries. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), falls account for **more than 45%** of fatalities in construction, with ladder misuse being a major contributor.

The risks are real, but so are the solutions. With proper knowledge, preparation and practices, ladder-related accidents can be drastically reduced. Here's how construction teams can work smarter and safer with ladders.

### Ladder Safety Made Simple

Safety doesn't have to be complicated. Following a few essential guidelines can dramatically reduce the

risk of ladder-related incidents.

#### ***Pick the Right Ladder for the Job***

**OSHA emphasizes** the importance of selecting a ladder designed for the task at hand. Heavy-duty ladders are necessary for jobs involving bulky tools or materials, while a lightweight step ladder might suffice for quick fixes. Always check the ladder's load capacity and height specifications to ensure it's up to the challenge.

#### ***Inspect Before You Climb***

Before every use, inspect the ladder for cracks, bent rungs, or missing safety features. Even minor defects can lead to catastrophic failures. **The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) advises** removing any damaged ladder from service immediately and reporting it to a supervisor.

### **Follow the Three-Point Rule**

This **golden rule of ladder safety**—always keeping three points of contact (two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand)—helps workers maintain balance and stability. It's a simple habit that can prevent many accidents.

### **Set Up for Success**

**Placement matters.** Ensure the ladder rests on a stable, level surface, and use a 4:1 angle ratio for extension ladders (one foot out for every four feet up). If necessary, secure the top and bottom of the ladder to prevent it from moving.

## **Training and Technology**

Knowledge saves lives. Employers should provide regular ladder safety training, covering everything from proper ladder selection to safe climbing techniques. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), offer **free training tools and resources** to help employers equip their teams with the right skills.

**Technology** is also taking ladder safety to the next level. Modern ladders now come with features like built-in stabilizers, sensors that alert users to improper angles, and fall-arrest systems designed to catch workers if they lose their footing. Investing in these advancements can make a huge difference in safety outcomes.

## **Building a Culture of Safety**

Ladder safety isn't just about the equipment—it's about the mindset. Employers play a vital role in creating a culture where safety is a shared responsibility. Simple steps like holding toolbox talks, setting clear safety policies, and encouraging open communication about risks can empower workers to prioritize safety every time they climb.

# *Key Takeaways*

### **PROPER LADDER SELECTION AND SETUP ARE ESSENTIAL**

Choosing the right ladder for the job, inspecting it before use, and setting it up correctly (e.g., on a stable surface with a proper angle) can significantly reduce ladder-related incidents. OSHA emphasizes the importance of matching the ladder type to the task and ensuring all equipment is in safe working condition.

### **TRAINING AND TECHNOLOGY SAVE LIVES**

Regular ladder safety training, provided by employers, is crucial to educating workers on safe practices like the three-point rule. New technologies, such as ladders with built-in stabilizers or fall-arrest systems, offer additional layers of protection, improving safety outcomes on job sites.

### **SAFETY STARTS WITH CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP**

Creating a safety-first mindset is vital. Employers can build a culture of safety by conducting toolbox talks, setting clear policies, and leveraging free resources like OSHA consultations. Empowering workers to share and prioritize safety ensures a more secure and productive work environment.

