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LADDER SAFETY

Ladders are involved in many tragic accidents, some of which are fatal. Your life literally can depend on knowing how to inspect, use and care for this tool. Always try to use the “buddy system” when using a ladder. One individual should assist in holding the ladder in place while the other ascends/descends the ladder. Individuals under the age of 18 should never be allowed to work on ladders. Only authorized and trained individuals should be allowed to use ladders.

Inspecting Ladders

Before using any ladder, inspect it. Look for the following faults:

1. Loose or missing rungs, cleats or bracing
2. Loose nails, bolts, or screws
3. Cracked, broken, split, dented, or badly worn rungs, cleats, or side rails
4. Wood splinters
5. Corrosion of metal ladders or metal parts
6. Missing or damaged side rails or foot pads

If you find a ladder in poor condition, don't use it! Immediately report it. It should be tagged and properly repaired or immediately destroyed. Be advised, any repair can only involve replacement of an identical part. No alteration or change can ever be made to a ladder.

Using Ladders

Choose the right type and size ladder. Except where stairways, ramps, or runways are provided, use a ladder to go from one level to another. Keep these tips in mind:

1. Be sure straight ladders are long enough so that the side rails extend above the top support point by at least 36 inches.
2. Don't set up ladders in areas such as doorways or walkways where others may run into them, unless barriers protect them. Keep the area around the top and base of the ladder clear. Don't run hoses, extension cords, or ropes on a ladder that would create a tip or fall hazard.
3. Don't try to increase the height of a ladder by standing it on boxes, barrels, or other objects. Never splice two ladders together.
4. Set the ladder on solid footing against a solid support. Don't try to use a stepladder as a straight ladder.
5. Place the base of straight ladders out away from the wall or edge of the upper level about one foot for every four feet of vertical height. Don't use ladders as a platform, runway, or scaffold.
6. Tie in, block, or otherwise secure the top of straight ladders to prevent them from being displaced.
7. To avoid slipping on a ladder, check your shoes for oil, grease, or mud and wipe it off before climbing.

8. Always face the ladder and hold on with both hands when climbing up or down. Don't try to carry tools or materials with you.
9. Don't lean out to the side when you're on a ladder. If something is out of reach, get down and move the ladder over.
10. Most ladders are designed to hold only one person at a time. Two may cause the ladder to fail or throw it off balance.
11. On a step ladder, never stand above the indicated top most safe step or on the cross braces.
12. Store ladders in well-ventilated areas, away from dampness.
13. Ensure you do not exceed the maximum weight limit allowed for the ladder.

Remember to practice safety. Don't learn it by accident.

Fast Fix for Loose Ladders

Tightening the metal braces can return a loose ladder to rock-solid.

1. There's probably at least one wobbly wooden stepladder lurking in the garage, shed, or basement. Often, these ladders simply are too old to be fixed. But, often you can return a loose ladder to rock-solid status by tightening its metal braces.
2. Locate the hex nuts on the outside of the ladder rails; there should be one at each rung. Tighten the nuts with a wrench, then check to see if the ladder is more stable. If it's still a little wobbly, tighten the nuts again. If any wobble remains after the braces have been fully tightened, the ladder is beyond repair and must be replaced.

Ladder Safety Tips

Important ways to prevent accidents on an extension ladder:

1. For many exterior chores, you need an extension ladder. Here's a way to keep it steady. Support the ladder base with a 2x4 cleat. Cut the cleat about 12 inches longer than the width of the ladder. Then drive two 16-inch long 2x4 stakes a foot into the ground. Screw the cleat to the stakes and stand the ladder against it.
2. Keep these safety rules in mind:
 - a. Stand the ladder only on dry, level ground, never on top of mud, ice, or snow.
 - b. The distance from the house to the base of the ladder should equal one-fourth the height of the ladder.
 - c. When working on a ladder, don't overreach. Keep your hips within the vertical rails.