

# Back to Basics

## Ladder Safety That Prevents Falls

Ladders are one of the most common tools on a jobsite—and also one of the most misunderstood when it comes to safety. According to the American Ladder Institute, they're safe and useful when used properly, but even experienced workers can benefit from refreshing the basics before every climb.

The first step in staying safe starts before you ever put a foot on the ladder. Always choose the right ladder for the job—one that's the correct height and duty rating for the work you're doing. A ladder that's too short, too long, or not rated for the total weight it carries (you + tools + equipment) can easily lead to instability or failure.

Once you've picked the right ladder, take a moment to inspect it closely. Check for loose parts, bent rails, missing rungs, worn feet, or slippery substances on gripping surfaces. A ladder in poor condition isn't just uncomfortable to use—it's dangerous, and it should be taken out of service until repaired or replaced.

Proper setup matters just as much as inspection. Always place your ladder on firm, level ground and avoid slippery conditions at the base or top support points. Never lean a ladder against weak surfaces or place it in front of doors that can open toward it. Keeping these basics right dramatically reduces the risk of slips or falls.

When it's time to climb, practice good habits that make a real difference in safety. Face the ladder, climb slowly and deliberately, and maintain three points of contact—that means two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand on the ladder at all times. Carry tools using a belt or hoist line rather than in your hands, and keep your body centered between the



**Place the ladder on firm, level ground for the safest climb.** PHOTO: SUMMER PARADIVE - STOCK.ADOBE.COM.



**Never step or stand higher than the ladder was designed for.** PHOTO: MALAZONIIA - STOCK.ADOBE.COM

side rails—don't lean or overreach, which can tip the ladder.

Also remember that ladders are tools

with limits. Only one person should be on most ladders at a time, unless the ladder is specifically designed for multiple climbers. Feet, hands, and safety shoes should be free of slippery materials, and ladders should never be used in high winds or storms.

Finally, good ladder safety doesn't stop when the job is done. When transporting or storing ladders, support them properly to prevent damage, avoid sharp bends or sagging, and always keep them clean and dry so they're ready for the next use.

Ladder safety isn't complicated—but it does require attention, respect for the tool, and a few simple habits that become second nature. Following these steps from the American

Ladder Institute helps reduce injuries, protect your crew, and keep every climb—big or small—as safe as possible. **PB**