



Toolbox Talks

Step Ladders



Common Step Ladder Hazards:

- Damaged step ladder
- Ladders on slippery or unstable surface
- Unlocked ladder spreaders
- Standing on the top step or top cap
- Loading ladder beyond rated load
- Ladders in high-traffic location
- Reaching outside ladder side rails
- Ladders in close proximity to electrical wiring or equipment

Always inspect every step ladder prior to using it. If the ladder is damaged, it must be removed from service and tagged until repaired or discarded. Never use a damaged ladder!

- The anti-slip feet at the bottom of the step ladder side rails must all be present and in good condition.
- If the climbing and gripping surfaces of the step ladder are smeared with oil, grease or any other substance that could make the ladder slippery, the ladder must be cleaned before use.
- Step ladders with structural defects or are otherwise not safe for use must immediately be marked defective or tagged with “Do Not Use” (or similar language) and removed from service until repaired. If the step ladder will not or cannot be repaired, it should be destroyed and discarded.

Before climbing on any step ladder, think about where and how it will be set up for use.

- Read and follow all the instructions and warnings on the ladder.
- Do not use a step ladder in a partially open position. The base must be spread fully open with the spreaders locked.
- Do not use a metal step ladder near power lines or electrical equipment.
- Do not move or shift a step ladder while a person or equipment is on the ladder.
- Do not leave tools, materials, or equipment on a step ladder when the ladder is not in use. It is very easy to forget about them and when the ladder is shifted the objects can quickly become falling object hazards.
- Do not stand on the top step or cap of a step ladder.
- **Maintain a 3-point contact (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand) when climbing up or down a ladder.** Use at least one hand to grasp the ladder when climbing.
- Avoid over-reaching while on a ladder. If the work requires overreaching or precarious balancing, then the ladder should either be moved, a different ladder should be chosen that is more suitable for the task, or an alternate way of completing the task should be determined.
- Do not carry objects or loads while climbing a ladder that could cause loss of balance.

