Safety Matters

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Ladder Safety

Falls from elevated surfaces are frequently listed as one of the top 10 causes of accidents in the workplace. Most of these accidents occur due to failure to follow basic ladder safety. To help prevent ladder injuries, practice the following safety tips.

Setting up Safely

Make sure you select the correct ladder for the job—check the length and duty rating. Proper length is a minimum of three feet extending over the roofline or working surface. Inspect your ladder before each any of the following loose or damaged parts:

- Steps
- Rungs
- Spreaders
- Rung dogs
- Safety feet
- Other parts

Clear the area where you will be working. Never place a ladder in front of a door that isn't locked, blocked or guarded. Because metal ladders conduct electricity, use a wooden or fiberglass ladder near powerlines or electrical equipment.

Clear the area where you will be working. Never place a ladder in front of a door that isn't locked, blocked or guarded. Because metal ladders conduct electricity, use a wooden or fiberglass ladder near powerlines or electrical equipment. Check that all locks on extension ladders are properly engaged before placing your ladder on a steady surface. The ground underneath the ladder should be level and firm. Large, flat wooden boards braced underneath a ladder can help level it on an uneven surface or soft ground. Straight, single or extension ladders should be set up at approximately a 75 degree angle.

Use the 1:4 ratio to ensure your safety when on a ladder. Place the base of the ladder one foot away from whatever it's leaning against for every four feet of height up to the point of contact for the top of the ladder.

Use Caution

Always exercise caution when using a ladder with the following safety considerations:

- Make sure the weight that your ladder is supporting does not exceed its maximum load rating (user plus materials). And only one person should be on a ladder at a time.
- Keep your body centered between the rails of the ladder at all times. Do not lean too far to the side while working. Never overreach. Instead, descend from the ladder and move it to a better position.
- Do not step on the top step, bucket shelf, or attempt to climb or stand on the rear section of a stepladder.
- Always face the ladder when climbing up or down. Never leave a raised ladder unattended.
- Slowly step down from a ladder if you feel dizzy or tired.
- Non-slip footwear should be worn at all times when on a ladder.

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