

New employees or people who are unfamiliar in the use of ladders should be given instruction documents and training before being allowed to use one. Ladders are the single largest source of work related accidents and the small amount of training and knowledge required in their use can eliminate most of the risk associated with ladders.

General Ladder Precautions

Before working with a new ladder, always read the manufacturer's instructions particularly regarding maximum weight ratings and any restrictions in use. Never use a ladder if you are sleepy, ill, or if you are taking medication. Never use a ladder if bad weather conditions exist. Do not use ladders in doorways or other high traffic areas. If a ladder must be used near a door, make sure the door is locked or have a co-worker stay with the ladder to make sure that an accident does not occur. Only use fiberglass or wooden ladders near power lines or other sources of electricity to avoid electrical shock hazards.

Ladder Inspection

A ladder needs to be visually inspected before it is used to catch any possible dangerous defects. Rungs should be firm and unbroken, braces fastened securely, all ropes, pulleys and other moving parts in good working order. If any damage is found during the inspection, the ladder should be repaired before it is used.

If the ladder is beyond repair, it should be taken out of service and a new ladder used in its place.

Correct Setup of a Ladder

Always make sure the feet of a ladder are fitted with non-slip rubbers. Ensure the ladder is level and positioned solidly on the ground. If the ground is soft or uneven, use boards under the legs for support.

Once the ladder has been put in position, test it to verify it is secure, where possible tie the ladder to something which will not move at the top and bottom. The legs on a stepladder should always be spread fully and locked into position using the spreader bar or other locking mechanism before using.

How to Climb a Ladder

Face the ladder when climbing or descending and use both hands. Mount the ladder from the center, not from the side. Tools should be carried in your pockets or in a bag attached to a belt, or raised and lowered by rope. Be sure that the soles of your shoes are clean and dry. Work facing the ladder, holding on with one hand. Don't lean too far to the side while working. A good general guide is to keep your body centered between the rails of the ladder. Instead of leaning to the side, get down and move the ladder. In case of sudden dizziness or a panicky feeling, bow your head, drape both arms over the rung in front of you, close your eyes, and wait until the feeling passes.