

TOOLBOX TALK: LADDER SAFETY

Job or site _____

Date _____

Led by _____

Open with this

Everybody look at the ladder you were about to use. We are going to spend five minutes on it, because a ladder is the tool on this job most likely to hurt one of us this year.

The talk

Ladder falls are not usually dramatic. Most of them are six to ten feet, onto a driveway or a subfloor, and they end in a broken wrist, a broken heel or a head injury. The fall is short. The landing is what does the damage.

Almost every ladder fall comes down to one of four things. The base slid out. The top moved sideways. The person reached too far and took the ladder with them. Or they were carrying something and had one hand for the ladder instead of two.

The angle fixes the first one. One foot out from the wall for every four feet of height. If the ladder is sixteen feet to the contact point, the feet are four feet out. Too steep and it tips back on you. Too shallow and the base walks out from under you, which is the one that hurts.

The three foot extension fixes the second one. If you are stepping off onto a roof or a landing, the side rails have to go three feet past it, and the ladder has to be tied off at the top. Nobody has ever fallen off a ladder that was tied at the top and footed at the bottom.

The third one is the one we all do. You are two feet short of the last screw and moving the ladder means climbing down, moving it, climbing up. So you lean. Keep your belt buckle inside the side rails. The moment it goes outside, your weight is outside the base and the ladder is coming with you.

The fourth one is three points of contact. Two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand, at all times. That means the tool goes up in a bag, on a hoist, or in a pocket. Not in your hand while you climb.

Point at these before anybody starts

- The feet of every ladder on site: are they on solid, level ground, and are the shoes flat and not worn smooth
- The angle on the tallest ladder here, measured one out for every four up
- The top of any ladder used for access, three feet above the landing and tied off

- The rails and rungs for cracks, bends, missing bolts and anything painted over
- The top cap and top step of every stepladder on site, which nobody stands on
- The duty rating sticker, and whether it covers the person plus tools plus material

The rules that apply

- A ladder used to get to an upper level must extend at least 3 feet above the landing and be secured at the top.
- Set a straight or extension ladder at about a 4 to 1 angle: 1 foot of base out for every 4 feet of working length.
- Keep three points of contact going up and down. Carry tools in a bag or hoist them, never in a hand.
- Do not stand on the top cap or the top step of a stepladder, and do not use a closed stepladder as a straight ladder.
- Ladders with a broken rung, a bent rail or a missing foot are tagged and taken off the job the same day, not leaned in the corner.
- Never place a ladder in front of a door that opens toward it unless the door is blocked, locked or guarded.

Ask the crew

- Which ladder on this site is the one you least like using, and why is it still here?
- Where are we going to tie off the ladder at the top today, and who is doing it?
- What are we carrying up today that should be going up in a bag instead of a hand?

Close with this

Before anybody climbs today: feet solid, angle right, tied at the top if you are stepping off it, and both hands free.

Attendance

Everybody who was present signs, including subcontractors and anybody visiting the site.

	Print name and signature
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This talk is general safety information for a crew briefing, not legal advice and not a substitute for the training your employees are required to have. Standards are quoted for orientation only. Check the current text of the standard and your own state plan, which may be stricter than the federal rule.