



for custodians

S A F E T Y T A L K S

STEP UP TO LADDER SAFETY

Ladders are a common tool that many employees take for granted. Although they are easy to use, they are often misused, causing serious injuries or deaths. Four rules for ladder safety to avoid injury are:

1. Choose the right ladder for the job

- Check the duty rating (found on the ladder side rail) to see if you have the right ladder for the job. Be sure not to subject the ladder to a work load greater than its rated capacity.
- Make sure the ladder is the correct type and length for the job. Stepladders are used when you need a free-standing ladder or one with a tool tray. Extension ladders may be required for high work.
- Never use a metal ladder when working around electricity.

2. Make sure the ladder is in good condition

- Inspect the ladder before each use. Ladders can be damaged while in transit or storage, and through use or abuse.
- Check all parts to make sure they are in good working order free from corrosion, rust, rot, cracks, and other defects. Look for missing, damaged or loose components.
- Make sure all rungs are free of slippery substances such as oil.
- Tag and place out of service all defective ladders. Never use a damaged ladder or a painted ladder (paint can hide defects).

3. Set up the ladder correctly

- Be sure that all ladder feet are on firm, level ground. Don't place on slippery surfaces.
- Stepladders should be fully open and spreaders firmly locked.
- Straight ladders should be placed at an angle so that the base is one foot away from the wall for every four feet of height. Always be sure that the locks are fully engaged.
- To gain access to a roof, the ladder should extend at least three rungs above the roof's edge.
- Get help with a ladder that is too heavy to handle alone. If possible, have another person hold the ladder when you are working on it.

4. Work safely on the ladder

- Climb facing the ladder. Maintain a three-point contact when climbing a ladder. That means two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand are in contact with the ladder at all times.
- Stay centered while working, never lean to the side. Your belt buckle should remain between the two side rails at all times.
- Get off the ladder to move it.
- Keep tools in a belt, or hoist objects up after you. Do not carry items in your hands.
- Shoe soles should be clean and made of non-skid material.
- Don't stand above the second step from the top of a stepladder and above the 4th rung from the top of an extension ladder.
- Don't climb a closed stepladder or the back of a stepladder.

For more ladder safety tips check out the course on your district's [SafeSchools.com](https://www.safeschools.com) website.