

# Ladder Safety



Falls from portable ladders are a major source of injury in the workplace. Anyone who uses a ladder should have hands-on safety training to learn about the various risks involved and the precautions necessary to prevent falling.

## To view a series of helpful ladder safety videos

- Visit [www.amtrustfinancial.com/losscontrol](http://www.amtrustfinancial.com/losscontrol)
- Go to the “Related Content” section
- Click “Ladder Safety” at the bottom of the list

## Choosing the Right Ladder

Using a ladder for purposes not anticipated in its design is a common cause of falls. Workers select among the ladders that are made available to them by the employer, so employers should ensure that the right ladders for the task are provided. Do not use a chair, barrel, box or anything else as a makeshift ladder.

## Inspecting a Ladder

Before using any ladder, inspect it and look for the following faults:

- Loose or missing rungs, cleats, or bracing
- Loose nails, bolts, or screws
- Cracked, broken, split, dented, or badly worn rungs, cleats, or side rails
- Wood splinters
- Corrosion of metal ladders or metal parts, and missing or damaged foot pads

If you find a ladder in poor condition, don't use it. Report it and tag it so others won't try to use it. Except for re-tightening loose fasteners, only a manufacturer can adequately and safely repair a ladder, so defective ladders must be removed from the workplace as soon as possible.

## Setting up a Ladder

Once you've inspected your ladder and established that it's in good condition, it's important to know where and how to set up the ladder.

- Before setting up any ladder, check for overhead electrical wires, and other obstructions
- Clear the area around the base and top of the ladder of debris, tools and other objects
- If you must use a ladder in passageways, driveways or other high-traffic areas, set up suitable barricades
- If you're using a ladder in a doorway, lock the doors shut
- Place the ladder feet 1/4 of the ladder's working length away from the base of the structure (e.g. if the ladder measures 8 feet between its base and its support point at the top of a wall, there should be 2 feet between the base of the ladder and the foot of the wall)
- Rest both side rails of an extension ladder on the top support and secure the ladder to prevent slipping
- If you will be stepping onto a higher platform (e.g. a roof or scaffold) from the ladder, make sure the ladder extends at least 1 meter (3 feet) above that platform
- Place the feet of all ladders on a firm, level footing
- Secure the bottom of extension ladders to prevent slipping
- Have someone hold the ladder if possible, especially if the ladder doesn't have slip-resistant feet or secure blocking
- Do not set up a ladder on a box, barrel, cart, table, scaffold, ice or on any other unstable or slippery surface
- Ensure the locks on extension ladders are fully locked, and that the stretchers on step ladders are fully extended and locked



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## Climbing a Ladder

By following these tips you can climb with greater comfort and security:

- Grasp the rungs of the ladder, not the side rails
- The rungs are easier to hold onto in case your foot slips
- Face the ladder when going up or down and when working from it
- Keep the center of your body within the side rails
- Maintain three-point contact by keeping two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand, on the ladder at all times
- Do not carry objects in your hands while on a ladder
- Instead, hoist materials or attach tools to your belt

## Staying on a Ladder

Adopt these rules:

- Do not work from the top three rungs of an extension ladder or top two rungs of a step ladder
- Wear protective footwear with slip-resistant soles and heels
- Be sure the soles of footwear and ladder rungs are clear of mud or other slippery substances
- Don't straddle the space between a ladder and another object
- Don't overreach from a ladder. Step down and move the ladder as required
- Never move or shift a ladder while a person is on the ladder
- Keep your balance. Don't try to do work that will disrupt your balance or make you unstable
- Ladder climbing is strenuous. Take reasonable breaks at intervals
- Don't try to use a ladder if you feel ill, dizzy, or weak
- Climb up and down ladders slowly and deliberately

## Other Safety Precautions

- Aluminum ladders are electrically conductive, so use wooden or fiberglass ladders for electrical work, or for outdoor work that may be done in proximity to overhead wires
- Do not join two short ladders to make a longer ladder
- Do not use a self-supporting step or A-frame ladder as a single extension ladder or partially closed
- Do not use a ladder placed in a horizontal position as a scaffold plank or runway
- Read and follow all instructions, warnings and markings on a ladder before use
- Use only approved ladder accessories for their designed use

The enclosed resources and links are for your review and use only as your company deems appropriate. They are intended as a place to start when finding information about a particular safety subject. They are not intended to provide authoritative answers to safety and health questions relating to your specific work environment. If you choose to use this information it should be modified as necessary to suit your individual operation and needs. It is neither the intent nor the implication of AmTrust North America, or its representatives, to address all safety and health hazards; or to assure compliance with any local, state or federal regulations.

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