CrewSigned

Ladder Safety Toolbox Talk

5-minute read-aloud · Last reviewed November 24, 2026

Ladders are on almost every job we do, and that is exactly why they hurt people. We use them so often that we stop thinking about them. Most ladder falls are not from great heights. They happen a few feet off the ground, on a quick job, when someone is in a hurry. A fall from six feet onto concrete can still end a career.

Start with the right ladder. It has to be long enough for the work and rated for your weight plus your tools and material. If you are working anywhere near power lines or live electrical work, use a fiberglass ladder, never aluminum. If the job takes both hands for a long time, a ladder is probably the wrong tool and we should talk about a lift or a scaffold.

Look the ladder over before you climb. Check the rails for cracks and bends, the rungs and steps for damage, and the feet for missing pads. Make sure there is no mud, grease or ice on the steps. If anything is wrong, tag it, take it out of service and tell me. Do not tape it up and keep going.

Set it up right. An extension ladder should go one foot out at the base for every four feet of height to where it rests. When you are getting off onto a roof or a deck, the ladder has to stick out at least three feet above the landing, and it should be tied off or held so it cannot slide. Put it on firm, level ground and keep it out of doorways and traffic unless someone is guarding it.

When you climb, face the ladder and keep three points of contact: two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand. Carry tools in a belt or haul them up on a line. Keep your belt buckle between the rails. If you have to lean to reach, climb down and move the ladder.

On a stepladder, open it all the way and lock the spreaders. Never stand on the top step or the top cap, and never use a folded stepladder leaned against a wall.

A ladder takes ten seconds to check and a minute to move. A fall takes much longer to heal.

Discussion questions

1. Which ladder on this job would you pull out of service today, and why?
2. Where on this site would you need to tie off or secure the top of an extension ladder?
3. What task are we doing this week that should use a lift or scaffold instead of a ladder?

OSHA standard

29 CFR 1926.1053, Ladders
https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1926/1926.1053

SOURCES

Ladder Safety QuickCard (OSHA 3246): https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/PORTABLE_LADDER_QC.pdf
Falling Off Ladders Can Kill: Use Them Safely (OSHA 3625): https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3625.pdf
Reducing Falls in Construction: Safe Use of Extension Ladders (OSHA 3660): https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3660.pdf
Stairways and Ladders (OSHA 3124): https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3124.pdf

This talk does not replace training that an OSHA standard requires. Scripts are based on OSHA and NIOSH publications and rewritten in plain language.

Safety Meeting Sign-In Sheet

TOPIC

Ladder Safety Toolbox Talk

COMPANY

JOB / SITE

DATE

TIME

PRESENTER

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