

CHOOSING AND USING LADDERS

When you're in a hurry to reach a high place, it's tempting to climb on a chair, table or anything handy to get there. But is it worth the risk? This year, more than 30,000 people will be disabled by falls involving ladders and ladder substitutes. The good news is that most ladder accidents are preventable. All it takes is the right ladder in good working condition along with solid placement of that ladder before climbing on it.

Choose the Right Ladder for the Job

When you select a ladder, make sure it's strong enough and long enough for the job. Ladders are labeled with duty ratings. Type I, the industrial ladder, holds 250 pounds. Type II loads up to 225 pounds. Type III, the household ladder, holds up to 200 pounds. Check the ladder's rating and don't exceed its limits. Remember to include the weight of the tools or materials you plan to use.

If you work around electrical wires, don't choose a metal ladder. A number of accidents occur each year because power lines and equipment wires contact metal ladders. Use a dry wooden or nonconductive fiberglass ladder for this kind of work.

Inspect the Ladder Before You Use It

Before you use any ladder, inspect it. Make certain that the spreaders can be locked in place when open. Be sure straight ladders have safety feet. Metal ladders, either straight or step, should have rubber or plastic feet as well as step coverings. Be certain the ladder's steps are wide enough for you to spread your feet for balance.

Check for loose or bent rungs. A rung that revolves may seem solid, but if it

twists unexpectedly under your weight, you could lose your balance and fall. Look for cracked side rails on wooden or plastic ladders and for bent parts on metal ladders. Replace any missing parts and tighten loose hardware, but don't try to repair major structural damage. Instead, invest in a new ladder.

Set Up Your Ladder Carefully

Place your ladder on a firm, level surface with its feet parallel to the wall it's resting against. If you have to use the ladder in a busy area, use a barricade to prevent collisions and lock any nearby door that opens toward you.

Use the four-to-one ladder rule: Set the base of your ladder one foot away from the wall for every four feet of ladder height. This ratio is important because if the angle is

too steep, you can fall backward. If the angle is too horizontal, the ladder can slip out from under you.

Climb Cautiously


When you climb up or down a ladder, be sure to face it. Hold on to the side rails with both hands. Carry only necessary tools on your belt, use a rope to raise heavier equipment. If you use power equipment, make sure the ladder is securely tied.

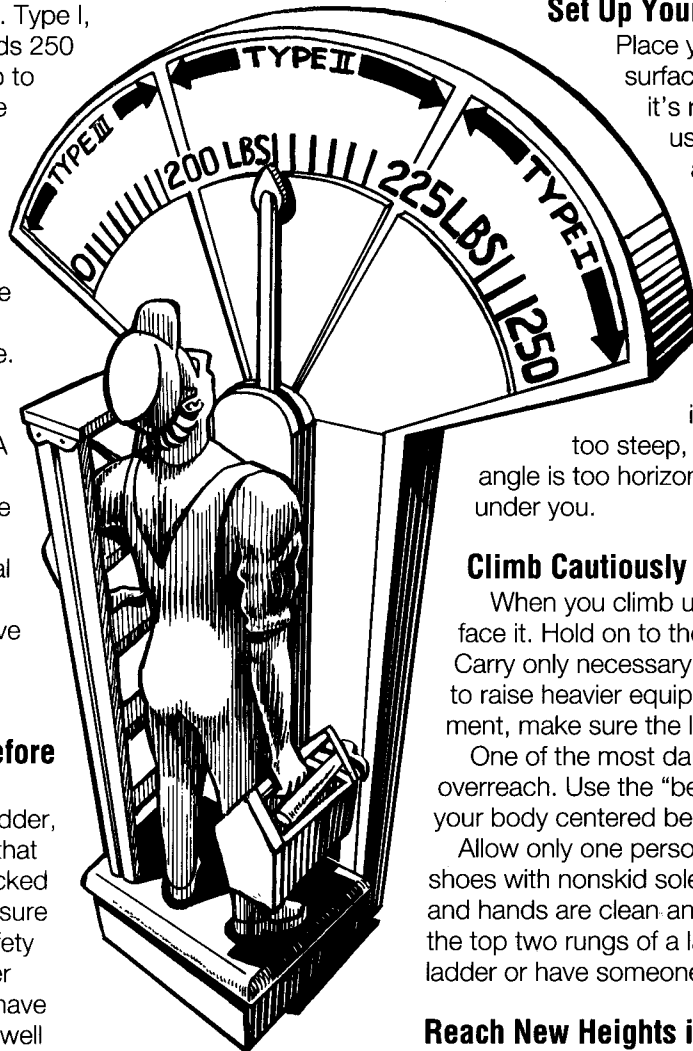
One of the most dangerous ladder hazards is to overreach. Use the "belt buckle" rule: Always keep your body centered between the rails.

Allow only one person on a ladder at a time. Wear shoes with nonskid soles, and make sure your shoes and hands are clean and dry. Remember, never use the top two rungs of a ladder, and be sure to tie off the ladder or have someone support the base.

Reach New Heights in Safety

It's not difficult to use a ladder safely. Just keep in mind four basic rules:

- Choose the right ladder for the job.
- Inspect the ladder before you use it.
- Set up the ladder up with care.
- Climb carefully. 



When you select a ladder, make sure it's strong enough for the job, and remember to include the weight of the tools or materials you plan to use.