

# Ladder Safety – Safety Talk

August 2011



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**CHICAGO**



The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) estimates that every year more than 90,000 people receive emergency room treatment because of ladder accidents.

Falls from ladders at any height can result in serious or even fatal injuries.

## INSPECTING YOUR LADDER

Ladders should be inspected prior to each use. Here are some defects to look for:

- Broken or missing rungs, cleats, or steps;
- Broken or split rails;
- Corroded or missing components; or
- Immediately remove and label ladders that fail inspections.

## NEVER PAINT YOUR LADDER

**The paint may cover up defects**

## STEP LADDERS

Remember the following when using step ladders:

- Do not climb a closed step ladder;
- Do not climb on to the top or the stop step of the ladder;
- Ensure the spreader or locking devices are engaged prior to climbing;
- Do not climb the cross-bracing on the rear of the ladder (unless it is designed to be climbed); and
- Never use step ladders to access elevated platforms.

## POSITIONING LADDERS

- Follow the “4 to 1” rule for non self-positioning ladders: the length from the base to the wall shall be one-fourth the height from the ground to the top of the ladder.
- When standing at the base of the ladder with your arms extended straight forward, the palms should fall directly on the rung in front of you.
- Tie the ladder off to the structure to help secure it (esp. when you can't follow the 4 to 1 rule).
- Ask for assistance when setting up your extension ladder.
- Ladder shall extend 3 feet above the platform it is being used to access.
- Do not place the ladder in front of a door that opens towards the ladder.
- Keep a distance of at least 10 feet away from electrical lines (use fiberglass ladders).
- Post signs and/or barricades when using a ladder in a high-traffic location.

Follow these safe work practices when using ladders:

1. Always maintain at least three points of contact with the ladder at all times: both feet and one hand.
2. Do not place ladders on slippery or uneven surfaces.
3. Do not carry materials in your hands when climbing a ladder.
4. Inspect the ladder prior to use.
5. Your belly button should always be between the side rails of the ladder.
6. Remember to follow these practices even when using ladders at home!

## LADDER SAFETY TRAINING:

*Required for all employees that use ladders for their jobs*

*Offered by Environmental Health and Safety once a quarter*