

RISK CONTROL CONSULTING

Ladder Safety

Falls from portable ladders are one of the leading causes of occupational fatalities and injuries. Many work site injuries are caused by accidents involving ladders that are not properly set up or used safely. Employers must train employees to recognize and minimize ladder-related hazards. Following these guidelines can help ensure worker safety.

Before using any ladder, check its condition. Make sure there are no broken, cracked, or missing rails and that rungs are not slippery from grease or oil. Check for damage or corrosion on metal ladders. If a ladder is in poor condition, do not use it. Report the problem and then tag the ladder with a warning sign, such as “Defective” or “Do Not Use.” A competent person should periodically inspect all ladders and remove damaged ladders from use until they are repaired.

When choosing and using a ladder, keep the following in mind:

- Choose the appropriate type and size ladder for the job, including correct fittings, and safety feet.
- Near electrical conductors or equipment, use only ladders with non-conductive side rails.
- Set the ladder on solid footing, against a solid support.
- Place the base of a straight ladder out away from the wall or edge of the upper level about one foot for every four feet of vertical height.
- Be sure straight ladders are long enough so that the side rails extend above the top support point by at least 36 inches.
- Single cleat job-made ladders should be 15 to 20 inches wide with ladder cleats uniformly spaced 12 inches apart.
- Never try to increase the height of a ladder by standing it on other objects, such boxes or barrels, or by splicing two ladders together.
- Portable ladders should be tied, blocked or otherwise secured against movement.
- Keep ladders away from doorways or walkways, unless they can be protected by barriers.
- Keep the area around the top and base of the ladder clear. Don't run hoses, extension cords, or ropes on a ladder; these may create obstructions.
- To avoid slipping on a ladder, check your shoes for oil, grease, or mud and wipe it off before climbing.
- Climb the ladder carefully, facing it and using both hands. Use a tool belt or hand line to carry materials.
- Most ladders are designed to hold only one person at a time. Never exceed the maximum rated capacity.
- Don't lean out to the side when you're on a ladder. If something is out of reach, get down and move the ladder.
- Ladders should never be used sideways as platforms, runways or scaffolds.



This Tribal First Risk Control Consulting fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice. For more information on this topic, please contact Tribal First Risk Control Consulting at (888) 737-4752 or riskcontrol@tribalfirst.com.