

# Extension Ladder Safety

Extension ladders are used every day in the workplace. Whether ladders are part of your normal duties or just used occasionally, it's important to know and understand the basics of extension ladder safety.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were over 58,000 nonfatal injuries and over 600 fatal accidents involving falls in 2014.

Proper planning, inspection, set up, and use of ladders are paramount in minimizing incidents.



## Proper Planning

Select the proper extension ladder for the job and familiarize yourself with it. Extension ladders are labeled with weight capacity and duty rating to help you choose the correct ladder. Make sure you're not sleepy, ill, or taking medication that may impair your abilities. Use only fiberglass or wood ladders when you're working around electricity.

## Inspection

Extension ladders should be inspected for defects before each day's use and after any occurrence which could damage the ladder, such as a drop. There should be no broken, damaged, or missing rungs, cleats, or steps. There should be no missing bolts, rivets, or fasteners. Side rails should be solid and undamaged. If any part of the ladder is damaged, it should be repaired or replaced with a new ladder.

## Setup

The feet of the extension ladder should be level and positioned solidly on the ground. The ladder should be fitted with a slip-resistant base and be secured to the roof or wall with tie-offs or a ladder stabilizer. Tie-offs can be anchored with bolts or clamps to the roofline or directly to the wall. The ladder should be placed at a 75-degree angle. The base of the ladder should be placed one foot away from the wall for every four feet in height (1:4 ratio). The ladder should extend at least 36 inches above the upper support level if the employee will be leaving or mounting the ladder at that point. Lanyards should be used if available.

## Climb

Make sure you're facing the ladder at all times. Your hands, shoes, and the ladder should be dry. Keep your body between the side rails to prevent tipping. Since 50% of all ladder accidents involve carrying items up a ladder, use a tool belt or pull items up with a rope. Maintain three points of contact with the ladder (two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand). Climb slowly, and don't get distracted. Never use the top three rungs of an extension ladder.

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Extension ladders are involved in accidents every day, and some of these accidents are fatal. With proper planning, inspection, setup, and use, you can reduce your chance for injury or even death.

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**These sources provide some guidance, as well as more details, on ladders.**

<http://www.osha.gov/Publications/osh3124.pdf>

<http://www.labsafety.com/refinfo/ezfacts/ezf132.htm>