

Using Ladders Safely

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), there were 161 fatal work injuries involving ladders in 2020 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). Ladder safety is not only important for those who use them on the job, but also as volunteers in the Civil Air Patrol. Failure to use a ladder properly can lead to devastating injuries. There may be times when a CAP member is required to use a ladder to tie up a banner at an end of year party, or to perform maintenance on an aircraft. Certain precautions need to be taken to ensure that the user of the ladder is safe.

Always inspect the ladder before each use. If it is damaged, it must be removed and tagged until it is repaired or discarded. This is to warn others of the faulty ladder. Parts of the ladder that must be inspected include the ladder rungs, side rails, any rivets or other hardware that is part of the ladder. Ensure all decals are present & legible and you have the correct capacity of ladder.

It is also important that the ladder be free from any slippery materials such as oil. Metal ladders should never be used near energized electrical circuits.

If you are using a step ladder, be certain the feet are on a stable surface that is level. Step ladders must have their legs fully opened with the spreaders locked in the open position. If using an extension ladder, ensure you have the ladder in the appropriate position.

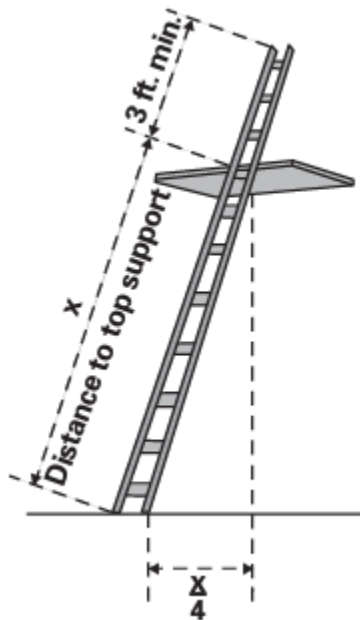


Photo 1 - Proper Extension Ladder Set-up (OSHA, 2005)

You should have a 4:1 ratio. An example of this would be the ladder is 12 feet tall, therefore the ladder's feet should be 4 feet away from the structure. The extension ladder should be secured to

prevent movement. When climbing the ladder, always face the ladder, and ensure you are always using three points of contact. Keep your body in the center of the ladder (OSHA, 2005).



Photo 2 - Proper Ladder Use (OSHA, 2005)

To fully understand the requirements and safe use of a ladder, always consult the owner's manual.

To summarize, these are just a few key points for ladder safety. If you see someone using a ladder incorrectly or needs assistance, employ a positive behavior such as "Knock it off" to have the person stop and reassess the task so they do not become injured. As Benjamin Franklin once said, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure". In other words, take an extra minute or two to inspect the ladder. These extra few minutes may save you from receiving serious injuries.

Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2022). *Fatal injuries from ladders down in 2022; nonfatal ladder injuries were essentially unchanged*. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2022/fatal-injuries-from-ladders-down-in-2020-nonfatal-ladder-injuries-were-essentially-unchanged.htm>

OSHA. (2005). *OSHA Portable Ladder Safety QUICKCARD*. Retrieved November 16, 2022, from https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/portable_ladder_gc.pdf