

TOOLBOX TALK #33

COMMON LADDER MISTAKES – PART 2

Everyone on the jobsite uses ladders. But are they using them safely? Here are some common mistakes we find in the field of construction. We listed more in Part 1.



Carrying items

Attempting to climb a ladder while holding tools or other objects can cause workers to lose their balance, which could lead to a fall. It is recommended to use a tagline, a tool belt or an assistant to convey materials so that the climber's hands are free when climbing.

Leaning or reaching out beyond the ladder rails to perform a task

Doing so can cause workers to lose their balance and potentially fall. One general rule is the “belt buckle rule”. That means keeping your belt buckle between the side rails. Instead of reaching or leaning out to one side or the other, get down from the ladder and move it to the proper spot.

Not knowing OSHA's most cited ladder violation

When a portable ladder is used to access an upper landing surface, OSHA requires that ladder to extend at least 3 feet above that upper landing surface. OSHA also requires that when an extension isn't possible because of the length of the ladder, it shall be secured at its top to a rigid support and a grasping device be provided to employees who are mounting and dismounting the ladder. In fiscal year 2024, OSHA issued 1,852 of the total ladder citations of 2, 573 just on this one requirement making it number 3 in its Top Ten Most Cited standards.

Standing on top or near the top

Using the top or the top step of a stepladder is an OSHA violation. The agency advises not using the top three rungs on single, straight or extension ladders. Doing either can increase the risk for a fall, injury or fatality.

Not using a ladder for its intended purpose

This was another one of OSHA's more frequent citations under their ladder standard. Some examples: Using a ladder as a brace, gangway, plank, platform, scaffold or material hoist. Or simply using a normal stepladder in the folded position. Use your ladder the way the manufacturer intended it to be use. Don't know? **READ THE LABELS!**

Check out Part 1 for more common ladder mistakes.