Ladder Safety

Ladders can be very useful for reaching and climbing but their incorrect use can result to injury or even death. Trips, slips and falls from ladder are common if personnel climbs them improperly or if the wrong type of ladder is used, or if the ladder is defective. Basic maintenance is required to keep them in good condition and to ensure that they are safe to use. Personnel must be appropriately trained in how to use a ladder safely and understand their proper use.

There are many types of ladders that personnel uses often and include step, single, extension, sectional, trestle, extension trestle, special-purpose, trolley, side-rolling ladders and other types.

Basic Recommendations:

- Ladders should only be used for their designed purpose. Bookshelves, tables or other makeshift “ladders” should not be used.
- Only use ladders with the correct type of safety feet for the surface and keep them free from slipping hazards.
- Always check before use and ensure that there are no loose or broken rungs and no weak or damaged rails and that they are level and uniformly spaced (10-14 inches apart). Discard them if any parts are broken.
- Use both hands when climbing up or down a ladder.
- Metal ladders should not be used when working on or near electrical equipment.
- Ladders should not be used near electrical equipment and other potential hazards.
- The area around the top and bottom of a ladder clear should be kept clear at all times.
- Position ladders at an angle where the horizontal distance from the top support to the foot of the ladder is 1/4 the working length of the ladder.
- Stay within safe limits of balance and never shift a ladder while standing on it.

By following the above recommended guidelines, employee training, and ladder maintenance, employees will avoid injuries associated with ladder use. For additional resources, contact your local OSHA branch, or refer to the online OSHA manual concerning Ladder Safety at: U.S. Department of Labor. Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Ladder Safety 1926.1053. In case of life-threatening emergencies, notify OSHA at (800) 321 OSHA. The nearest area or state office will field the call for help.