

# *Safety Circular*



November 2026

## **Ladder Safety**

Ladders are tools. Many of the basic safety rules that apply to most tools also apply to the safe use of a ladder:

- If you feel tired, dizzy, or prone to losing your balance, stay off the ladder.
- Do not use ladders in high winds or storms.
- Wear clean slip-resistant shoes. Shoes with leather soles are not appropriate for ladder use since they are not considered sufficiently slip resistant.
- Before using a ladder, inspect it to confirm it is in good working condition.
- Ladders that are damaged or have loose or missing parts must be rejected.
- Rickety ladders that sway or lean to the side must be rejected.
- The ladder you select must be the correct size for the job.
- When the ladder is set-up for use, it must be placed on firm level ground and without any type of slippery condition present at either the base or top support points.
- Only one person at a time is permitted on a ladder unless the ladder is specifically designed for more than one climber (such as a Trestle Ladder).
- Ladders must not be placed in front of closed doors that can open toward the ladder. The door must be blocked open, locked, or guarded.
- Read the safety information labels on the ladder.
- The on-product safety information is specific to the particular type of ladder on which it appears. The climber is not considered qualified or adequately trained to use the ladder until familiar with this information.

**Each year in the U.S., more than 500,000 people are treated, and about 300 people die from ladder-related injuries. The estimated annual cost of ladder injuries in the U.S. is \$24 billion, including work loss, medical, legal, liability, and pain and suffering expenses.**



## The Three Points-of-Contact Climb

When climbing a ladder, it is safest to utilize three points-of-contact because it minimizes the chances of slipping and falling from the ladder. At all times during ascent, descent, and working, the climber must face the ladder and have two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand in contact with the ladder steps, rungs and/or side rails. In this way, the climber is not likely to become unstable in the event one limb slips during the climb. It is important to note that the climber must not carry any objects in either hand that can interfere with a firm grip on the ladder. Otherwise, three points-of-contact with the ladder cannot be adequately maintained, and the chance of falling is increased in the event a hand or foot slip occurs.



## Fall Factors

Factors contributing to falls from ladders include haste, sudden movement, lack of attention, the condition of the ladder (worn or damaged), the user's age or physical condition, or both, and the user's footwear. Although the user's weight or size typically does not increase the likelihood of a fall, improper climbing posture creates user clumsiness and may cause falls. Reduce your chances of falling during the climb by:

- Wearing slip-resistant shoes with heavy soles to prevent foot fatigue;
- Cleaning the soles of shoes to maximize traction;
- Using towlines, a tool belt, or an assistant to convey materials so that the climbers hands are free when climbing;
- Climbing slowly and deliberately while avoiding sudden movements;
- Never attempting to move a ladder while standing on it;
- Keeping the center of your belt buckle (stomach) between the ladder side rails when climbing and while working. Do not overreach or lean while working so that you don't fall off the ladder sideways or pull the ladder over sideways while standing on it.

# Ladder Duty Rating

The Duty Rating of the ladder is an indication of the maximum weight capacity the ladder can safely carry. The Duty Rating of your ladder can be found on the specifications label. Do not use ladders if the Duty Rating label is missing. Safety standards require a Duty Rating sticker to be placed on the side of every ladder. Do not assume that a longer ladder has a higher weight capacity. There is no relationship between ladder length and weight capacity.

## Ladder Duty Rating

Type	Capable of Supporting	Rated Use
Type IAA	375 lbs	Special Duty
Type IA	300 lbs	Extra Heavy Duty Industrial
Type I	250 lbs	Heavy Duty Industrial
Type II	225 lbs	Medium Duty Commercial
Type III	200 lbs	Light Duty Household

Sources: ANSI A14 and OSHA 1910.26

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**References:** ♦ [americanladderinstitute.org](http://americanladderinstitute.org) ♦ [cdc.com](http://cdc.com) ♦