

Ladder Safety Prevents Fall-Related Injuries

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It is estimated that in 2004, 29 percent of all disabling falls among Oregon construction workers were falls from ladders, and most of the falls were usually less than 10 feet above the ladder's base of support. Each ladder-related accident averaged 10 weeks lost time.

Why do people fall from ladders if they're so easy to use? Most falls happen when a ladder slips, tilts, or shifts as a worker is climbing or descending. Other reasons include a slip of the foot, loss of balance, incorrect selection of a ladder for the task, or overreaching and being struck by a vehicle or other moving object. Remember: you don't have to fall far to get seriously hurt.

How can workers reduce ladder fall risks?

- Matching the task to the appropriate ladder
- Setting ladders correctly
- Climbing and descending ladders properly
- Frequently inspecting and maintaining ladders

Following all manufacturers recommendations

Oregon OSHA minimum ladders rules are also covered in:
Subdivision 3/X rules

- 1926.1053, Ladders
- 437-003-0065, Extension ladders
- 1926.1060, Training requirements

One of the most overlooked general requirements is that a ladder or a stairway must be provided at all points of access where there is a break in elevation of 19 inches or more.

Not only do employers have a responsibility for training workers so they understand these safe work practices and can use them effectively...employees have the responsibility to follow safe work practices. Safety training should include at a minimum:

- Selection of proper ladders for tasks
- Inspection and use
- Moving and placement of ladders
- Storage of ladders
- Transporting ladders
- Maintenance and repair

Additional requirements may also need to be included.

To assist workers, an employer should develop a checklist of safe practices for using portable ladders. This will help workers in their everyday activities. Some items to include are:

- Side rails should extend at least three feet above the upper landing when used for access. When this is not possible, the ladder must be secured to a rigid support at its top and a grab rail must be available to help employees get off the ladder.
- Ladders are not loaded beyond the manufacturer's duty rating.
- Ladders are only used for the purpose for which they are intended.
- Ladders are used on stable, level surfaces or they are secured so that they cannot be displaced.

Non-self-supporting ladders are placed so that the working length of the ladder is four times the horizontal distance from the ladder's base to the structure – a 4:1 ratio.

Additional items to include can be located through OR-OSHA by visiting www.orosha.org or contacting your safety and loss control consultant for assistance.

Caution should also be taken to ensure ladder manufacturers do not have ladder recalls in effect. One of the most recent recalls is from Louisville Ladder Inc., where they recalled their Multi-Purpose, Step-to-Straight, Combination, Manhole, and Extension Trestle Ladders. For additional information regarding product recall, please visit the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) web site, www.cpsc.gov.

Remember! Safety is everyone's responsibility at home and at work.