Three-Point Rule Will Make You Safer



Whether workers climb a ladder or the steps to a large vehicle, failing to heed the three-point rule has resulted in many workplace injuries and deaths.

A worker climbing a small ladder fell to the ground from a height of only four feet (1.2 meters), striking the side of his head. He was found unconscious and later died in hospital. He may have been holding a container as he climbed, so probably didn't maintain three-point contact with the ladder. Three-point contact means two hands, one foot or two feet, one hand.

Here are other essentials for ladder safety:

- Extend an extension ladder at least three feet (one meter) beyond the top surface the ladder rests on.
- A ladder is secure when its feet are placed one-quarter of the ladder's working length away from the base of a structure.

Before using a ladder

- Inspect the ladder. If you find defects, reject and tag it. Have faulty ladders repaired or discarded immediately.
- Use a ladder with correct strength, type and length for your task.
- Get help when handling a heavy or long ladder.
- Place the ladder on a firm, level surface. Use a ladder with slip-resistant feet or secure blocking, or have someone hold it.
- Rest both side rails on the top support. Secure ladder to prevent slipping.
- Keep ladders away from electrical wires.
- Tie off ladders at the top and secure the bottom to prevent slipping.
- Set up barricades and warning signs when using a ladder in a doorway or passageway.
- Before mounting a ladder, clean muddy or slippery boot soles.

When using a ladder

- Always face the ladder when climbing or working from it.
- Keep the center of your body within the side rails.
- A ladder should not be placed horizontally as a scaffold plank or runway.
- Don't carry objects in your hands. Hoist materials or attach tools to a belt.
- Don't work from the top three rungs.

- Don’t use a portable ladder if you could replace it with a fixed stairway or scaffold.
- Don’t join two short ladders to make a longer ladder.
- Don’t paint wooden ladders. Paint may hide defects. Instead, use wood preservatives or clear coatings.

Ladder safety is a frame of mind. Use it to climb your way to success on and off the job.