

Toolbox Talk Training: Portable Extension Ladders – Safety DO's and DO NOT's

Many ladder-related accidents can be prevented by following basic safety practices when using portable extension ladders. Keep these important “Do's and Don'ts” in mind whenever working with a ladder.

Safe Practices – DO:

- **Inspect the ladder before each use.** Check for damage, loose parts, cracks, bent rails, or other defects. Remove the ladder from service if any condition could affect safe operation.
- **Set the ladder on a stable surface.** Make sure both ladder feet are placed on a level, secure, and non-slip surface. If a stable surface is not available, secure or stabilize the ladder to prevent movement. When working in high-traffic areas such as doorways, hallways, or driveways, use cones, barricades, or caution tape to protect the ladder from being bumped or displaced.
- **Ensure proper support.** Position the ladder so both side rails are fully supported against the wall or structure unless the ladder is specifically designed with a single-support attachment.
- **Use the correct ladder angle.** Place the ladder base approximately one foot away from the wall for every four feet of working ladder height. This helps maintain stability and reduces the chance of the ladder slipping.
- **Extend the ladder above the landing surface.** When using a ladder to access an elevated area, make sure the side rails extend at least three feet above the landing point to provide a secure handhold while getting on or off the ladder.
- **Stay clear of electrical hazards.** Keep the ladder, your body, tools, and materials at least 10 feet away from energized electrical lines or equipment. Greater clearance distances are required for voltages above 50 kilovolts.
- **Maintain proper hand contact while climbing.** Always keep at least one hand firmly gripping a rung or side rail when climbing up or down. Simply sliding your hand along the rail is not considered maintaining a secure grip.
- **Keep your body centered.** Maintain your balance by keeping your belt buckle between the ladder side rails at all times. If you cannot comfortably reach your work area, climb down and reposition the ladder instead of overreaching.

Unsafe Practices – DO NOT:

- **Do not use a ladder for unintended purposes.** Extension ladders are designed for climbing and access only.
- **Do not use conductive ladders near electricity.** Never use metal ladders or ladders made from conductive materials where they could contact energized electrical equipment or power lines.
- **Do not carry items that affect your grip or balance.** Never climb a ladder while carrying tools or materials that prevent you from maintaining at least one secure handhold.
- **Do not move a ladder while occupied.** Never attempt to reposition or shift a ladder while someone is standing on it.

These guidelines provide important information specific to the ladder you are using. Does anyone have questions, comments, or additional safety tips related to portable extension ladder use? Thank you for participating in today's toolbox talk. Please remember to sign the training certification form before leaving so you receive credit for attending today's training session.

