



TOOLBOX TALKS

Stepladders – A Quick Review

OVERVIEW

More serious accidents occur in the building construction industry from falls than from any other single cause. Studies show that electricians and painters using stepladders are involved in a large percentage of these falls.

This does not necessarily mean that stepladders are unsafe. They can be. It all depends on how the stepladder is used. Looking further into the accident studies, you'll find that it was usually an unsafe action or work practice, or an unsafe condition that brought about the accident.

FOR DISCUSSION...

Here are examples of these situations:

- **Broken side rails and treads** – A damaged stepladder really can't be repaired properly for safe use, nor would it be acceptable according to OSHA standards. Without certified testing, it should be thrown away.
- **Stepladders used as straight ladders** – A stepladder is not designed for this type of use and should never be utilized when leaned against a wall or other surface. The treads may not be level or the legs may kick out or slip out from under you. The metal spreaders between the front and back sections keep the ladder stable and give the rails support, so be sure they are fully extended and locked into place prior to use.
- **Standing on the top or next to top step** – The higher you go on a ladder, the more top heavy you are. That's why you should never use the top two steps of a stepladder. A good practice is not to go above the third step from the top. If you have to, go find a bigger ladder for the job at hand.
- **Scaffold supports** – Stepladder treads are not designed to carry the load of a scaffold, unless certified by the manufacturer for that use.
- **Working from the backside** – The slope and the rungs create an unsafe condition. And never step on the cross braces. They are made for structural support and not for handling the load of a worker.
- **Poor footing** – A stepladder needs level four-point support to be steady.

Remember that many falls are simply caused by using ladders the wrong way. Using them properly is the only way to protect yourself from injury.

QUESTIONS

1. Are we using our stepladders correctly?
2. Who is the best source for use of stepladders?
2. Do we have any defective stepladders on the job?
4. Who do we notify when a stepladder is damaged?

SAFETY MEETING ATTENDANCE RECORD

DATE _____

DISCUSSION LEADER _____

LOCATION _____

SAFETY TOPIC(S) _____

PRINT NAME/SIGNATURE
