

## Safety and Ladders - Part II

Ladders are one of the biggest hazards of overhead work and result in many accidents. This week's **Tail Gate Safety Topic** expands on *Safety and Ladders - Part I* by again covering certain rules which must be followed in the selection, use and care of ladders. As mentioned in *Safety and Ladders - Part I*, always inspect a ladder before using it.

Look for:

- Loose rungs or cleats
- Loose nails, bolts or screws
- Cracked, broken, split, badly gouged or worn rungs, cleats or railings
- Splinters or splinters

You should always select a ladder that is long enough for the work to be done. As a rule of thumb, and to allow for reasonable safety, the ladder should be long enough so that you can work standing no higher than the fourth rung from the top. This allows you to grasp the side rails of the ladder.

The top of the ladder should never extend more than three or four feet above its upper support. Never step on a rung above the upper support since it's liable to make the base of the ladder "kick out."

When climbing or coming down a ladder, always face the ladder and keep both hands free for gripping the side rails.

Wall grips on the tops of risers are useful to prevent side slipping when the ladder's leaning against a smooth surface. The top and bottom of the ladder should be secured to prevent shifting. Safety feet, cleats, lashing, etc., can be used to make portable ladders secure.

When placing the ladder make sure you don't rest it against a sash or window pane. A board securely fastened (not nailed) across the top of the ladder will provide a solid bearing at each side of the window.

If you must rest a ladder against a pole, or round column, be sure the upper end of the ladder is firm so it won't slip or cause the ladder to fall. When ladders are used this way, they are less likely to sway or fall if the upper end is equipped with a rung of webbing or similar material.

When carrying a ladder, balance it on your shoulder near the center. Keep the front end of the ladder high enough to clear the top of anyone's head and the back end close to the ground. Be extra careful and keep your mind on where the ladder is in relation to the people and objects around you as you carry it. Pay particular attention when you approach passageways and doorways or any place where your view is obstructed.

NEVER stand a ladder on a box or barrel or any other makeshift objects so as to increase its reach. Another words, ALWAYS use a ladder that is the correct height for the work at hand. If you don't have a ladder that is long enough then get one. If you must borrow a ladder be sure to thoroughly inspect it and make sure it is safe.

Before climbing a ladder make sure it is at the proper angle. The recommended angle is about 75 degrees from horizontal. If the base is out too far, the stress on the side rails is more severe and the wider angle can cause slippage. If the horizontal distance is much less than one-fourth of the incline length of the ladder, it is pitched too steep for safe work. Store your ladders in dry, well-ventilated locations where they are not exposed to the weather or excessive heat or dampness. When stored horizontally, support both ends and at in-between points to keep the middle from sagging, and maybe loosening the rungs or cleats and warping the rails.

Treat wood ladders periodically with a clear preservative such as clear varnish, white shellac or linseed oil. Never paint a ladder because it hides defects and deterioration. Ladders are necessary and useful tools. Be sure to use yours safely and take care of them when not in use so that they remain useful and SAFE tools.