

– July 2005 –



Tips on Ladder Safety

Falls from ladders can result in serious injury, including permanent disability or death. Using a ladder properly requires training and following safety procedures.

Use the right ladder for the job and inspect it before using:

- Always use an approved ladder, never a makeshift one.
- Never use metal ladders in jobs or locations involving potential contact to electricity.
- Look for cracks, bends, twists, or breaks in the rungs, steps, or side rails.
- Look for broken or missing rivets or other fasteners, and loose hinges.
- Make sure the rungs or steps are free of grease, dirt, etc.
- Never paint a ladder, as paint can hide defects.

Set up the ladder properly:

- Be sure you are trained to set up a ladder safely. Orchard ladders have specific set up procedures. If you are unsure, ask your supervisor to demonstrate.
- Always place a ladder on solid footing. Never put a ladder on an unstable object or on soft ground where one leg can sink in and tip the ladder.
- Never place a ladder in the bucket of a front-end loader.
- Ladders on hard surfaces should have slip-resistant feet.
- Straight ladders should have both side rails in contact with whatever it is leaning against.

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- Don't lean a straight ladder against insecure objects like boxes or barrels.
- When setting up a straight ladder, use the 1:4 rule - for every 4 feet of "wall" height, the base of the ladder should extend one foot from the "wall" or surface.
- If using a ladder in front of a door, lock or block it so it cannot be opened.

Climb up and down the ladder properly:

- Always face the ladder when climbing up or down.
- Keep both hands free to climb the ladder. Carry small tools in tool belt; larger tools and supplies can be raised by rope. Picking bags should not be carried by hand.
- Use the three-point system: always have at least both feet and one hand, or both hands and one foot, in contact with the rungs or steps while climbing up or down.
- Grasp the rungs or steps, not the side rails.
- Place the arches of your feet, not the balls of your feet, on the steps or rungs, to prevent sliding off.
- Wear slip resistant footwear with heels; heels will prevent feet from slipping through the rungs.

Stand on the ladder properly:

- Don't stand on the top three rungs of a straight ladder, or top two steps of a step ladder.
- Never lean over to the side of the ladder. A good rule is to keep your belt buckle inside the side rails. If you cannot reach something, move the ladder.
- Keep picking bags inside the side rails.
- If you are working with both hands on straight ladder, lock a leg around a rung to steady yourself.

Ask your supervisor if you are unsure about the ladder or its use.

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