

Ladder Safety Toolbox Talk

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A ready-to-run 5-minute crew talk · Portable Ladders · OSHA 29 CFR 1910 Subpart D · 1926 Subpart X

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How to run this talk (5 minutes): Gather the crew around an actual ladder from your site so you can point at the duty-rating label, the feet, and the rungs. Read each talking point aloud, then ask the discussion questions and let the crew answer. Close with the one rule, check the ladders in your area together, and pass the sign-in sheet on page 2. This is an awareness refresher — it does **not** replace the ladder training your employer must provide, and the manufacturer's instructions and your site's procedures always come first.

Pick the Right Ladder

- **The duty rating is a total, not a body weight.** It covers **you plus your tools plus your materials**. Type IAA holds 375 lb, IA 300 lb, I 250 lb, II 225 lb, III 200 lb — read the label on the ladder you're about to use.
- **Never use a metal ladder near electricity.** Around energized parts or overhead lines, use **fiberglass** — aluminum conducts.
- **Get the length right.** An extension ladder must reach **about 3 feet above** the landing you're stepping onto, and you should never need the top rungs to get there.
- **Use the ladder for what it was designed for.** No planks across rungs, no stepladder used folded against a wall, no standing a ladder on a box, drum, or scaffold to gain height.

Inspect It Before Every Use

- **Look it over every single time** — not just once a month. Cracked or split rails, bent or missing rungs, loose rivets, damaged feet, seized spreaders or locks, missing labels.
- **Check for slippery rungs** — grease, mud, ice, wet paint. Clean them before you climb, not after you slip.
- **A damaged ladder gets tagged and removed from service immediately.** Don't lean it in the corner "for now" where someone else will grab it.

Set It Up Right

- **The 4-to-1 rule:** for every **4 feet** of height to the support point, the base goes **1 foot** out from the wall. Too steep tips backward; too shallow slides out.
- **Firm, level footing.** No mud, no gravel, no stacked scrap to level it — use the ladder's levelers or find solid ground.
- **Secure it.** Tie off the top, or have someone hold the base. On a stepladder, open it fully and **lock the spreaders** before anyone climbs.
- **Watch the doorway.** A ladder in front of a door gets a lock, a guard, or a barricade — that's a classic way people get knocked off.

Climbing & Working

- **Three points of contact, always** — two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand. **Face the ladder** going up and down.
- **Climb with your hands free.** Hoist tools with a rope or a belt — don't carry a load up the rungs.
- **Don't overreach.** Keep your **belt buckle between the rails**. If you can't reach it, get down and move the ladder — every time.
- **Stay off the top.** Never stand on the **top cap or the top step** of a stepladder, or the top three rungs of an extension ladder.
- **One person at a time** unless the ladder is specifically built for two.

Discussion — Ask the Crew

1. Pick up the nearest ladder. What's its duty rating — and does it cover you plus the tools you'd be carrying?
2. You need to reach a roof edge 12 feet up. How far out does the base go, and how far above the edge should the ladder extend?
3. You're two feet short of the fitting you need to reach. What do you do?
4. You find a ladder with a cracked side rail. Walk me through exactly what happens next.

The one rule to remember today: Inspect it, set it at 4-to-1 on firm footing, keep three points of contact, and move the ladder instead of reaching. If the ladder is damaged, it comes out of service — tagged, today.

This talk is a refresher, not the required training. OSHA requires employers to train employees to recognize ladder hazards — **29 CFR 1910 Subpart D** (including **1910.23**) in general industry and **29 CFR 1926 Subpart X** in construction. The **Ladder Safety Training Kit** adds the full video (available in English or Spanish), quiz & answer key, certificates, and sign-in sheets — reusable for every new hire. **SafetyVideos.com/Ladder_Safety_Training_p/22.htm**

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Summarizes selected federal requirements and recognized safe practices as of July 2026 (OSHA 29 CFR 1910 Subpart D walking-working surfaces, including 1910.23 ladders; 29 CFR 1926 Subpart X for construction); not a complete compliance program. Also follow the ladder manufacturer's instructions and duty-rating label, your site-specific procedures, and any applicable state-plan or local requirements. © SafetyVideos.com

Toolbox Talk Sign-In Sheet

Attendance record · Ladder Safety Toolbox Talk · OSHA 29 CFR 1910 Subpart D · 1926 Subpart X

Date

Location / Facility

Presented by

#	Name (print)	Signature	Job title / Department
1			
2			
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14			

By signing above, each attendee confirms they took part in this toolbox talk and had the opportunity to ask questions. Retain this sheet with your training records. This is an awareness talk and is not, by itself, evidence of the ladder training required by 29 CFR 1910 Subpart D or 1926 Subpart X.