



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
MS AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY
EXPERIMENT STATION

MAFES DAWG TRACKS

A ladder is a common tool found around most homes and work places. While it seems easy enough for just about anybody to use, there are still over 160,000 people a year injured from falling off ladders. So, keep the following in mind to avoid injury.

Choose the right TYPE of ladder:

- Available in wood, fiberglass or aluminum material – While aluminum is the lightest, it should not be used near sources of electricity.
- Ladder sizes relate to length – Choose a ladder that will reach the height needed. A ladder too long or short can be dangerous. Remember to add 3 feet if going onto roof, and that you should never stand on the top few rungs/steps.
- Ensure the duty rating (weight the ladder is capable of holding) is sufficient. Take into account the weight of tools and items carrying, in addition to your body weight.

INSPECT the ladder:

- Start at the bottom checking the feet, siderails, rungs/steps, rivets, joints bolts, rung locks (on extension ladder), and spreader (on step ladder) to ensure nothing is missing, cracked, or bent. Never use a damaged ladder.
- Clean the ladder, especially the rungs/steps of oil, grease, mud, or anything that could cause a slip.

Take time to properly SET-UP the ladder:

Safe placement and stability are the key factors in proper setup...

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Do:

- Inspect the area for overhead electrical hazards or other obstructions.
- Ensure a firm level ground support to place the feet. Keep both siderails equally supported on extension ladders & all 4 legs on step ladders.
- Always lock spreaders, of a step ladder, in the open position.
- Place extension ladders at a 75-degree angle from the wall (or the base $\frac{1}{4}$ of its working length away from wall).
- Extend ladders 3 feet above roof lines, and step off the side of a ladder, not over the top, when getting onto a roof.

Do Not:

- Do not place ladders in front of doors, unless they are blocked or guarded.
- Do not lean a step ladder against a wall to use in the closed position.
- Do not place ladders on top of other objects (boxes, pallets, scaffolds) to gain additional height.

Safe USE:

- Clean & dry off the bottom of your shoes to avoid slipping. Do not wear flip-flops or Crocs climbing a ladder.
- Do not overreach. Keep your mid-body between the rails.
- Ensure rung locks are correctly in place before climbing on up extension section.
- Do not sit on or straddle the top cap of a step ladder.
- Always descend a ladder before relocating it. Never hop it over or move while in use.

Sources:

American Ladder Institute