

# DECEMBER *Safety Talk*

## Topic: Ladders

Falls from ladders injure more than 40,000 people in Canada every year. In a five year span in BC municipalities, 69 workers reported falls from ladders, resulting in claims costs of more than a half million dollars.

Employers, Supervisors and Workers all have responsibilities with respect to ladder safety, and need to understand that one ladder is rarely suitable for all jobs.

The first step in ladder safety is selecting the correct ladder by answering the following questions:

1. What type of ladder do I need?
2. What size is required?
3. What material should the ladder be made from?
4. What duty rating do I need?

### LADDER TYPES

Ladder types include:

- Straight/Extension Ladders
- Step Ladders
- Trestle and Two-Way Step Ladders
- Platform Step Ladders
- Combination Ladders



### LADDER SIZE CONSIDERATIONS

If you're using an extension ladder, remember that the top of the ladder must extend 3 feet over the top of the structure, and shouldn't extend more than 4 feet.

When setting up an extension ladder, remember the 1:4 rule: one foot out for every four feet up.

To test this: Stand with your toes at your ladder's base and extend your arms straight out. If your fingertips touch the rung nearest your shoulder level, your ladder should be at the 4 to 1 angle.



**Step Ladders** are designed to be self-supporting and are, in most cases, designed to be used by one person at a time.

Safe use of step ladders:

- Place the base on a firm and level surface.
- Make sure that all four feet are on the ground; never climb a closed step ladder leaning for support against anything.
- Open and lock the spreader bars.
- Never stand on the top, or the first step from the top, of a step ladder.

### LADDER MATERIAL

Ladders are made from a number of materials, each having its own characteristics and uses.

- **Aluminum** conducts heat and electricity.
- **Fibreglass** is heavier than aluminum but does not conduct heat or electricity.
- **Wood** is heavier yet, is a non-conductor of heat and electricity when clean and dry, but has a tendency to splinter, rot, warp and absorb moisture.

### DUTY RATING

When selecting a duty rating adequate for your needs, you **MUST** allow for the combined weights of the user, clothes, tools and material.

The maximum load rating of the selected ladder should **NEVER** be exceeded. The maximum load capacity ranges from 200 pounds for Light Duty Household, to 375 pounds for Special Heavy Duty ladders. Ladders should not be used when the user, clothes, tools and material exceed 375 pounds.

### LADDER INSPECTION

A thorough inspection should be carried out on each ladder. Those that are damaged badly enough to break, bend or twist parts, should be immediately tagged **DO NOT USE**.

***"If in doubt, tag it out"***