



# INSTALLATION SAFETY BULLETIN SB 25-03-6

## March 2025 : National Ladder Safety Month



## Choosing your ladder

One of the most common mistakes made by ladder users is choosing the wrong ladder for the job. Here are some things to consider:

- **Take into account your work environment when choosing your ladder.**  
For example, if you're working near sources of electricity, do not use a metal/aluminum ladder. Evaluate the surface on which the ladder will be resting. Is it uneven? Consider if there are any obstructions in the path of the climb. Our environment will also help you determine the type of ladder you need for the task — self-supporting stepladder or non-self-supporting single or extension ladder.

- **Consider the length of ladder you need.**  
It is unsafe to use a ladder that is too long or too short. When using a step ladder, for example, it is unsafe to stand on the top cap as it increases the likelihood of losing your balance. Likewise, when using an extension ladder, the top three rungs are not to be used for climbing. An extension ladder is too long if it extends more than 3 feet beyond the upper support point, as it can act like a lever and cause the base of the ladder to move or slide out.



*Remember: The advertised height of the ladder is the total length of the side rails. This does not take into account the reduced height due to the set up angles, or steps or rungs not suitable for standing or working from, and in the case of an extension ladder, the overlap between the sections.*

- **Pay attention to the Duty Rating of your ladder.**  
The Duty Rating is the total amount of weight your ladder will support. A taller ladder does not equate to a higher weight rating.

Here is the simple calculation for determining the Duty Rating needed for the job at hand:

$$\text{Your weight} + \text{Weight of your protective clothing \& equipment} + \text{Weight of your tools \& supplies being used} = \text{Duty Rating}$$



Find everything you need at [laddersafetymonth.com](http://laddersafetymonth.com)



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## Inspection and Maintenance

Ladders are useful tools that, when used properly, serve as a safety system for climbing. However, working at an elevated height presents additional risks, so it's essential to properly inspect and maintain your ladder.

Here are a few reminders of what you should be addressing:

### Safety Information

- Always verify that all safety information labels are fully attached and are legible.
  - Labels which are not fully attached, missing, or not legible can lead to misuse of the ladder, resulting in serious injury or death.
  - Understanding of the ladder duty rating and ensuring duty rating is clearly visible on the ladder will avoid issues caused by overloading the ladder.

### Inspection Detail

- Thoroughly inspect the ladder to ensure it is in good working condition by checking the following areas of the ladder when purchased and prior to each use.
  - Locks and spreader braces
  - Steps and rungs
  - Rails
  - Connections and fasteners
  - Ropes and pulleys
  - Feet, Safety shoes and other safety equipment
    1. Ensure foot pads are in good condition and secure.
    2. Worn or missing foot pads can cause the ladder to be unstable or slip out of position, both of which can result in serious injury or death.
- If a potential hazard is found, contact the manufacturer for replacement parts.
- Always use manufacturer approved replacement components and follow instructions provided.
- Never attempt to fix the ladder with unapproved components or methods.
- Where replacement components are not available, the ladder shall be destroyed.



### Proper Care

Maintain your ladder in a safe condition and maximize its lifespan by observing the following:

- Regularly lubricate the ladder's moving parts.
- Keep the ladder clean.
- Firmly support the ladder during transport and storage to avoid excessive wear and loading at support points.
- Protect ladders from impact, excessive heat, and corrosive materials.
- Do not use a ladder as a storage shelf.
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions on cleaning and lubricating.



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## Safety Before the First

Are you taking the time to properly inspect your ladders before starting to work? A thorough inspection must be made when the ladder is initially purchased and each time it is placed into service. Here are a few reminders of what you should be inspecting:

- Locks and spreader braces
- Steps and rungs
- Rails
- Connections and fasteners
- Safety shoes
- Ropes and pulleys



**Here are some steps to follow before taking your first step onto the ladder:**

- Thoroughly inspect the ladder to ensure it is in good working condition.
- Clean the ladder feet as well as the climbing and gripping surfaces.
- Read the safety information label(s) on the ladder.
- Confirm that the ground where the ladder is set-up is firm and level, or use approved accessories, such as ladder levelers.
- Ensure that any surrounding doors are blocked from opening, locked or properly guarded.
- If you're using a ladder outdoors, ensure that the weather is safe for ladder use.
- Clean the soles of your shoes to maximize traction and avoid slipping.
- Ensure that you are not tired, dizzy or prone to losing your balance before using the ladder.
- Use towlines, a tool belt or an assistant to carry materials so that your hands are free when climbing.



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