KEEP UP WITH LADDER SAFETY

Ladder safety begins with selecting the right ladder for the job and includes inspection, setup, proper climbing or standing, proper use, care, and storage. This combination of safe equipment and its safe use can eliminate most ladder accidents.

Always check a ladder before using it. Inspect wood ladders for cracks or splits. Inspect metal and fiberglass ladders for bends and breaks. Never use a damaged ladder. Tag it "Defective" and report it to your supervisor.

When setting up a ladder, make sure it's straight and sitting firmly on the ground or floor. If one foot sits lower, build up the surface with firm material, don't set it on boxes, bricks, or other unstable bases. Lean the ladder against something solid, but not against a glass surface. Make sure the ladder is placed at a safe angle, with the base away from the wall or edge of the upper level about one foot for every four feet of vertical height. Keep ladders away from doorways or walkways unless barriers can protect them.

Keep the steps and rungs of the ladder free of grease, paint, mud or other slippery material. And remember to clean debris off your shoes before climbing. Always face the ladder when climbing up or down, using both hands to keep a good grip on the rails or rungs. Never carry heavy or bulky loads up a ladder. Climb up yourself first, and then pull up the material with a rope or bucket.

Many ladder accidents occur because of slipping or skidding. You can prevent these accidents by equipping the ladder with non-slip safety feet, blocking its base, or tying it to a sound, permanent structure.

Overreaching is probably the most common cause of falls from ladders. A good rule is to always keep your belt buckle inside the rails of a ladder. Don't try to move a ladder while you're on it by rocking, jogging, or pushing it away from the supporting wall.

When you've finished the job, properly store the ladder so it won't be exposed to excessive heat or dampness and will be in good condition for the next time.