



Tool Box Safety Talk No. 4

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Extension Ladders

Roofing would be impossible without extension ladders and today we will be talking about the proper methods of setting up and climbing of extension ladders. The risk of falls from ladders can be prevented if proper safety procedures are used. Extension ladders are not to be used as work platforms, extension ladders are used to access the roof.

Set-Up

Inspect the ladder rungs and rails for damage such as cracks, splits, loose rivets, twisted or jammed parts before use. Choose another ladder if something is found wrong. Tag the damaged ladder, take it out of service and have it repaired.

The roofer must first choose the proper length of extension ladder for the job. The ladder shall be long enough to extend a minimum distance of 900mm (3ft.) above the roof edge when set-up at a safe angle. The proper set-up angle is when the base of the ladder is placed on solid ground a distance of one (1) foot horizontally for each three (3) or four (4) feet vertically. If the ladder angle is too low the side rails can break or the bottom of the ladder can slip out. Choose ladders with anti-skid adjustable feet or have a crewmember hold the ladder when climbing. When the ladder is extended the ladder sections shall overlap each other by a minimum distance of 900mm (3ft). When erected the top of the ladder shall be tied to the structure to prevent it from being displaced or from falling.

Keep the ladder access points, the area surrounding the top and bottom of the ladder, free of materials, tools and debris. Barricades may be required in high traffic zones to prevent ladder displacement or to prevent injury to passers by. Do not place the ladder base on ice, snow, moveable objects or uneven surfaces to gain height. Place extension ladders in low-traffic areas, do not erect ladders in front of building access doors. Do not install metal extension ladders near overhead power lines and ensure that a safe distance is maintained when carrying, erecting and climbing ladders.

Climbing

Many accidents occur when workers are getting on and off ladders. Clean your footwear of accumulated mud, snow or other slippery substance, such as asphalt and ensure that the ladder rungs are free of this debris. Before mounting an extension ladder, test that it is stable and well secured to the building. When climbing up or down extension ladders always hold on to the ladder rungs using three (3) points of contact, two (2) feet one (1) hand or two (2) hands and one (1) foot taking one step at a time. Do not hold onto the side rails. Face the ladder rungs, keep your body between the side rails and maintain your balance. Do not lean to either side and do not carry anything in your hands while climbing. Equipment, tools and other objects should be hoisted to roof level using a rope, the roofer's hoist or by crane.