

# Safety Health Publishing

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## Off the Job Safety - Step Ladder Safety

*A man was cleaning leaves out of his eavestrough. He leaned over the side of the ladder to reach the last two feet of eavestrough, lost his balance and fell, landing on his back on a picket fence. The damage to his spinal cord caused paralysis from approximately four inches below his mid-chest to his toes.*

Falls from ladders are all too common. If you are lucky, you end up with little else but a bruise. Many people are injured very seriously from falls from ladders. Lets keep the following safety tips in mind when using ladders:

1. Don't use a four-foot ladder to do a job requiring a six-foot ladder.
2. Make sure the ladder is in good shape; it shouldn't wobble. Check all nuts and bolts for tightness. Make sure there are no cracks in the steps or the beams (sides of ladders) in a wooden ladder. In metal ladders check for kinks or bends.
3. Put the ladder on a firm, flat surface. The ladder could tip over if placed on soft ground. If you must use it on soft ground, place its feet on a piece of 3/4-inch plywood that is at least 10 inches wider and deeper than the base of the stepladder. This will act like a snowshoe to distribute the weight.
4. Open the ladder as far as it will go and make sure the spreader arms are locked in place.
5. Don't stand on the top of the stepladder or the two rungs below it. This will make the ladder very unstable. Most ladders have a warning to stay off the top step. Many people ignore this warning. That is dangerous.
6. When purchasing a ladder, ask questions from an informed salesperson. He should be able to point out the warnings on the ladders. Ladders are designed for different purposes and weights. Purchase the ladder that is appropriate for you.
7. Don't over reach from a ladder. Get down and move the ladder over to complete your work.
8. Face the ladder when climbing up or coming down

When you go up or down on a ladder always maintain three points of contact with the ladder, i.e. two feet and one hand.

Practicing these tips may save you a lot of trouble and pain.

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