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## TOOLBOX TALK

### Step Ladder Safety

#### DEFINITION:

If you use a ladder only occasionally, chances are it's a stepladder. Accidents happen just as easily with stepladders as with other types of ladders and scaffolding, and the consequences can be just as serious. In fact, a study of ladder accidents found 20 per cent of the injuries involved stepladders. Of 23 cases studied, 12 persons were injured in leisure time and 11 during working hours.

The most common type of accident was when the ladder tipped over sideways. These accidents were caused by reaching out too far to one side, causing an unintentional movement of the ladder. Other causes of stepladder accidents included placing the foot incorrectly, tripping and slipping, defective ladders and makeshift repairs, or failing to fold out the ladder properly.

Here are some safety tips to follow when using a step ladder:

- Inspect the stepladder to see if it is in good condition before using it. Ensure the rungs are solid and securely fitted in the stiles. Also check that the spreaders are in good shape and able to lock into place. Look for any twisting or distortions in the shape of the ladder
- Place the ladder on a solid, even surface. Don't place it on snow or ice. If you must position the ladder in a doorway or another traffic area, make sure the route is adequately barricaded to prevent collisions
- Lock the spreaders into place before ascending the ladder, and make sure the stepladder legs are fully open
- A stepladder is designed to be used in the open position. Never lean it against a wall to use it as a straight ladder
- Never climb onto the top two rungs of a stepladder. If you need to climb higher, get a longer ladder
- Always face the ladder when climbing up or down, and keep both hands on the side rails while climbing
- Do not carry tools or materials up or down a ladder with your hands. Instead, carry them on a tool belt, or move them with rope or a basket. Never overload a ladder with heavy materials, and do not allow more than one person on any ladder at one time
- Do not reach out too far from the ladder in any direction. If you must reach away from the ladder to work, climb down and move the ladder to a new position