

LADDER SAFETY
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The holidays are here and as you drive down almost any street you see at least one person decorating their home, while atop a ladder. According to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, “More than 500,000 people a year are treated for ladder related injuries in the U.S., with 300 of these injuries resulting in death.” Many ladder related injuries could be prevented, if proper safety rules are followed.

1. Inspect ladders before using them and never use a defective ladder. Check the ladder and your shoes, which should be rubber soled, for grease, mud or other slippery substances and remove these substances before climbing the ladder.
2. Carry ladders parallel to the ground.
3. Read the manufacturer’s recommendations and use a ladder only for the purpose for which it was designed. Do not load a ladder beyond it’s maximum intended load and do not have more than one person on a ladder, unless the ladder is specially designed for two.
4. When using a stepladder open it completely and lock the spreaders in place.
5. When using a straight ladder use the four to one ratio. Place the ladder so that its base is one-fourth of the height to the point of support.
6. Place the ladders feet on a substantial and level base, NOT on a movable object, and tie the top of the ladder adequately at the top to prevent it from slipping, if using a straight ladder. Do not use a ladder on snow or ice, or in periods of high winds.
7. Never use a metal ladder around electrical circuits or place them where they may come in contact with such circuits.
8. Do not place a ladder in front of a door that opens toward it unless the door is locked or guarded by someone.
9. Do not move, shift or extend a ladder when someone is on it. Never walk a ladder.
10. Do not stand on cross bracing, and do not use the top or top step for standing.
11. Do not climb higher than the third rung from the top of a straight ladder.
12. Do not climb higher than the second step from the top of a stepladder.
13. Always face the ladder when climbing up, climbing down or when working and keep both hands on the ladder when climbing. Carry tools in pouches around the waist, do not place tools or other materials on the steps, use a rope to raise or lower large or bulky items. Keep both feet on the ladder. Do not reach out so far that you have to place one foot on another surface. Pretend you have on a belt buckle and keep the buckle inside the rails of the ladder. Move the ladder when you can no longer comfortably follow this rule.
14. Never use a ladder when under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or if you are ill. If you become sick, dizzy or panicky while on a ladder, do not climb down the ladder in a hurry. Wait. Drape your arms around the rungs, rest your head against the ladder until you feel better. Then climb down slowly and carefully.
15. Two people are always required when a ladder is longer than twenty feet, and two people may be required when a ladder is shorter than twenty feet.

Information for this article was obtained in part from the websites of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons at www.aaos.org, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration at www.osha.gov and James Madison University at www.jmu.edu.