

# Ladder Safety

Here are some useful tips about ladders that apply to both interior and exterior use:



- Inspect ladders before use. Make sure that the rungs are intact and free of dirt and paint buildup that could interfere with footing.
- When extending or retracting an extension ladder, hold the pulley rope firmly; if the rope is released, the upper section could drop on your fingers, arms or feet.
- Follow the "four contact" rule: When using an extension ladder, make sure that the tops of both rails make solid contact with walls, and that both legs make solid contact with the floor or ground.
- Never stand higher than the third-highest rung on a ladder. Make sure that the ladder reaches at least three feet higher than the highest level you need to stand.
- Place foam protectors or wads of cloth on the tops of extension ladders, to prevent them from sliding and to protect the walls.
- On a stepladder, make sure the spreader bar is fully extended and locked in place.
- With a straight or extension ladder, make sure that the base is one foot away from the wall for every three feet of height.
- Make sure your pockets are empty of knives, scissors or other pointed tools before climbing any ladder.
- When on the ladder, keep your hips between the rails for good balance.
- Do not push or pull too hard with a scraper or other tools while balanced on the ladder.
- Always wear rubber-soled or another type of non-slip shoe on a ladder.

## Special Guidelines for Outdoor Ladder Use

- Avoid working in wet or windy weather, and do not climb a wet ladder.
- Keep all ladders away from power lines -- especially metal ladders.
- Make sure that the ground under the ladder is secure -- place plywood under the legs to ensure solid footing.
- A ladder can be additionally secured by tying it to a sturdy portion of the house or to a large eyebolt in the wall or fascia board.

Source: Rohm & Hass Paint Quality Institute

## Ladder Safety (continued)

- Ladders should always be placed on a stable and level base.
- The feet of ladders should be set in a way that ensures they won't slip backwards. If their rubberized footings aren't sufficient to make them safe, the base may be blocked or staked down.
- The top rails of the ladder should extend at least three feet beyond the upper landing surface to which it's being used to gain access. If that's not possible because the ladder isn't long enough, the ladder must be secured at the top to a rigid support and a handrail or other grab bar must be provided.
- Always face the ladder when ascending or descending.

### Stepladders:

- Before using a stepladder, look it over for any defects. Remember, we're not in a hurry.
- Neither the top or the top step of a stepladder is safe to stand on. If you need to go higher, get a taller ladder!
- Do not put tools or paint on the top of a stepladder. They can fall off.
- When using a stepladder, make sure the legs are **fully** open. Never lean a stepladder against a wall to use as if it were a straight ladder.

### Extension Ladders:

- ◆ Inspect ladders before each use - adjustable foot pads should swivel freely and not be jammed with dirt or mud. Ladders can be extremely hazardous when not set properly.
- Both feet of the ladder must be on a substantial and level base, not on moveable objects. A spotter should stand on the ground at the base, with his/her feet against the feet of the ladder, holding the ladder with both hands.
- The feet of the ladder should be set so they won't slip backwards. If the rubberized footings aren't enough to make them safe, the base may be staked down or blocked.
- Use the four-to-one rule: for every four feet of height, move the bottom of the ladder one foot away from the wall.
- Ensure the ladder is set to a sufficient height. An extension ladder should reach three feet beyond the work level. If it's being used to gain access to a roof or an upstairs floor, it should reach three feet beyond the walking surface.
- When practical, ladders should be tied at or near the top.