Choosing the Right Ladder

Always choose the correct ladder for the job or task to be performed.

There are many types of ladders, ranging from simple wooden job-built ladders to specialty ladders used for specific jobs. Ladders may be made of timber, aluminum, or fiberglass. There are three main types of ladders used in the construction industry: 1) extension, 2) step, and 3) multi-purpose.

Keep the following in mind when choosing the right ladder for your job:

- For indoor use, stepladders or multi-purpose ladders are usually recommended. For outdoor work, taller stepladders, multi-purpose, or extension ladders are generally more appropriate.
- Do not use aluminum ladders when working around electricity. Chose a ladder made out of non-conductive material for electrical work, such as when working near overhead power lines.
- Make sure that the ladder is the proper length to do the job safely.
- Chose a ladder that is designed for how you intend to use it. For example, do not use step ladders in a folded and leaned position in place of a straight ladder.
- Chose a ladder that is capable of supporting your weight and the weight of any materials you will be using. See the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Weight Rating</th>
<th>Duty Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-AA</td>
<td>375 pounds</td>
<td>Super Heavy Duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-A</td>
<td>300 pounds</td>
<td>Extra Heavy Duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>250 pounds</td>
<td>Heavy Duty Industrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>225 pounds</td>
<td>Medium Duty Commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>200 pounds</td>
<td>Light Duty Household</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Discussion leader duties:**
Obtain a ladder that you or an employee can use during the discussion to demonstrate key points.

**What this Toolbox Talk covers:**
This toolbox talk reviews how to choose the correct type of ladder.

**Discussion notes:**
Emphasize the importance of choosing the right ladder for the job. Note that 129 employees were killed in 2005 due to falls from ladders.

**Review Questions:**

1) What are the three main types of ladders?
   **Answer:** Extension, step, and multi-purpose.

2) What ladders are good to use around electricity?
   **Answer:** Fiberglass.

3) When are aluminum ladders not appropriate for use?
   **Answer:** When working around electricity.

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