

Ladders: choose the right access

Talk 03 of 52 | Week 3 | Working at height

Leader: adapt this talk to today's electrical work and site procedures. See the educational-use and liability notice on page 2.

START THE CONVERSATION

A quick overhead task can tempt someone to stretch from a ladder that is too short. Stop and choose access equipment that suits the task, location, and duration.

KEY TALKING POINTS

1. Inspect the ladder and remove defective ladders from use. Place it on a stable surface and protect it from traffic or displacement.
2. Use the ladder as designed. Do not stand on a stepladder's top or top step, and do not use a folded stepladder as a leaning ladder unless designed for that use.
3. Face the ladder while climbing and keep a secure handhold. Move the ladder instead of overreaching; carry tools in a way that does not compromise safe climbing.
4. Use nonconductive side rails where electrical contact could occur, but do not treat that as permission to approach energized equipment or power lines.
5. Electrical job example: an electrician is installing ceiling fixtures and repeatedly reaching sideways. Ask whether repositioning the ladder is enough or whether a different access method would better support the task. Include the weight and size of the fixture, both hands needed for the work, and activity below in the planning conversation.
6. Coordinate with other trades before setting up beside a doorway or corridor. Identify who controls access and where material can be staged without blocking the route. An apprentice watching traffic is not a substitute for an adequate setup and the protective measures selected by the supervisor.
7. Use a ground-level walk-through to discuss the sequence: getting tools to the work position, handling the fixture, moving the access equipment, and keeping the area below clear. If the plan requires stretching or balancing loose material, stop and revise it before anyone climbs.

ASK THE CREW

1. Is a ladder the best equipment for this task?
2. What could move or strike it?

BEFORE WORK STARTS

Have the supervisor review the access choice and setup before overhead work starts.

OSHA SOURCES / FURTHER READING

OSHA 1926.1053: Ladders

Attendance & action record

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Date: _____ Leader: _____

Company / jobsite: _____

Site hazards and controls discussed:

Follow-up action / responsible person / due date:

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Participant name	Signature / acknowledgment

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