



Observing Ladder Safety Precautions to Avoid Injuries

by [John Demas](#) on 04/04/09 at 11:31 am

Many of us use ladders around our homes so often that we rarely think twice about carefully positioning and climbing them. Instead, we often just pull one out of our garage or borrow one from a neighbor so we can quickly repair roof shingles, paint the upstairs window shutters or clean the leaves out of our roof gutters. When you've climbed ladders all of your life and never been injured, you tend to just assume you'll always be safe.

Sadly, as one recent article published by [MedicalNewsToday.com](#) indicated, nonfatal ladder injuries increased by 50% between 1990 and 2005. Furthermore, a January 2008 Home Safety Council publication noted that each year, "nearly 5.1 million people in America are injured by falls occurring in and around the home." [Click here to read more](#)

These numbers indicate that falls cause "one-third of all unintentional home injury deaths, and more than 40 percent of all nonfatal home injuries." [Read more here](#)

These statistics should motivate all of us to take every safety precaution possible when using ladders at home. The following list contains a number of helpful tips for protecting ourselves while using ladders:

- Carefully examine each ladder to be sure all of its parts are working properly before every placing your foot on the first rung. Also, make sure all of its key parts are present and properly fastened to it. Lock the ladder in place so it can't suddenly shift its position. Keep a regular maintenance schedule for the ladder posted in your home or garage and stick to it.
- Make sure the ladder you're about to use can handle your weight and was designed for your intended purpose.
- Whenever possible, avoid carrying anything in your hands when climbing a ladder. Use other safe means for moving work materials up to the roof or other destination.
- Should you start to fall or slip, you'll need both hands to steady yourself and stay on the ladder. Wearing a tool belt can help you keep your hands free; be sure each tool is safely fastened to it so it can't swing outwards and cause a hazard.

- Only use a ladder on firm, level ground. Any other surface can pose a serious threat to your balance.
- Whenever possible, fasten a ladder to a safe and secure surface.
- Never climb a ladder during high winds or near power lines. Always have someone else steady the ladder whenever possible. Try to position thick mats or other appropriate surfaces beneath your work area so if you do fall, you'll hit a surface softer than hard ground.
- Never lean a ladder against a moveable object like a weak tree branch or other unstable item.
- Make sure you're using the appropriate ladder for each intended use. Ask yourself or an employee at a home improvement store if your desired task requires a metal, wood or fiberglass ladder. Added Note: Be sure to purchase appropriate ladders for your family in case a fire forces you to exit your home upstairs. Next, immediately teach everyone how to properly use the purchased ladder(s) – or who they should seek out to help them if they are too young or infirm to position and climb down a ladder unassisted.
- Observe the commonly known “four-to-one rule:” A ladder needs to be based one foot away from whatever the top of the ladder is leaning against for every four feet of its height. You can find additional information about safely using ladders on the Web site of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Just type the word “ladders” into the search box at: www.cdc.gov
- If you're using an extension ladder, you'll need to raise the ladder to the proper height and then securely lock the sides. If you're using a step ladder, be sure you've locked the spreader before stepping on to it.
- Do not let children use a ladder for anything other than a playhouse, assuming it came with one. Yet even in that situation, you should first inspect the ladder to be sure it's been safely designed and always remain nearby and observe your children while they use any type of ladder. For their safety, it's probably best to forbid the use of any ladders away from home. You can never know what level of supervision, if any, will be offered elsewhere. Of course, properly supervised school playgrounds may provide the one safe exception to such a rule.
- Only wear shoes with appropriate soles, like rubber, that can grip the rungs of the ladder. It's far too easy to slip off one when wearing loafers or other shoes that have completely worn out, slick soles.
- Never allow more than one person at a time on a ladder. When you're climbing one, keep yourself centered between the rungs. Never climb onto the two top rungs.

If you'll observe each of these listed safety precautions, you should be able to avoid a ladder injury while safely making the home improvements you need. Keep in mind that some ladders

are defective and you have been injured from a defective ladder, contact an experienced personal injury attorney immediately.