

SPOTLIGHT ON SAFETY

WNC has many ladders on our campuses, being used by many different departments for different needs. They vary in size, material makeup and location, but there are some universal safety rules you should follow that can significantly reduce your risk when using a ladder. Safety is paramount when working at heights, as falls from step, straight, combination, and extension ladders are a leading cause of workplace fatalities. If you feel tired or dizzy, or are prone to losing your balance, stay off of ladders.

Ladder Safety labels: These labels must remain legible and attached to ladders. They primarily feature the ladder duty rating (maximum load capacity including user and materials), proper setup instructions (like the 4-to-1 rule), and safety warnings to prevent falls.

Safe Ladder Setup and Use:

- **Select the Right Material:** Use fiberglass ladders around electricity. Never use aluminum or metal ladders near power lines or exposed energized electrical equipment.
- **Inspect Before Climbing:** Check for cracks, loose rungs, or grease. Immediately tag any defective ladder as "DANGEROUS – DO NOT USE" and report it to EH&S.
- **Ensure Stable Grounding:** Only place ladders on flat, stable surfaces. Avoid using boxes or barrels to gain extra height.
- **Stay Centered:** Face the ladder and keep your body centered between the side rails. Never overreach, as this is a common cause of sideways tips.
- **Free Your Hands:** Use a tool belt or a hoist rope to move materials up. Carrying items in your hands prevents you from maintaining three points of contact: two hands and a foot or two feet and a hand.
- **Avoid the Top Steps:** Never stand on the top two rungs of a stepladder or the top three rungs of an extension ladder unless specifically designed for it.
- **Ladders to Access Roofs:** Extension or straight ladders used to access an elevated surface must extend at least 3 feet above the point of support.

Ladders must be secured with hooks or chains when not in use or laid down on their side. They may not be left leaning unsecured. If you have a ladder that needs to be secured, please fill out a Facilities Work Request or contact EH&S.

Resource: [OSHA Portable Ladder Safety QuickCard](#) provides a comprehensive summary of regulatory requirements.

LADDER SAFETY

Do's and Don'ts



DO!

1. Prior to use, inspect ladders to ensure they are in good condition and appropriate for the job.
2. Locate and review the ladder inspection label.
3. When not in use, keep ladders secured or lying down.
4. Always face the ladder when ascending or descending.
5. Maintain three points of contact with the ladder.
6. Obey the 4:1 rule...For every four feet up, an extension ladder base should be one foot from the wall.

DON'T!

1. Never use the top of the ladder as a step.
2. Don't carry any object or load that could cause you to lose your balance.
3. Never move, shift or extend a ladder when anyone is on it.

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