

## March is National Ladder Safety Month

Every year, hundreds are killed and thousands more are seriously injured due to falls from ladders.

The American Ladder Institute (ALI) has been leading the charge to promote ladder safety with training resources, flyers, and webinars as part of National Ladder Safety Month.

### **According to ALI, the 5 Most Common Ladder Mistakes are:**

1. Ladder is not the right size
2. Ladder is not on level ground
3. Lack of 3 points of contact
4. Overreaching
5. Missing the last step when climbing down

### **How can you participate in National Ladder Safety Month?**

- Educate workers on ladder safety
- Encourage safe ladder use
- Ensure ladders are properly inspected
- Evaluate the work area before setting up a ladder
- Eliminate hazards before they can hurt someone!

For more information about National Ladder Safety Month, visit:  
[www.laddersafetymonth.com](http://www.laddersafetymonth.com)



## **4 Ladder Legends: Myths, Mistakes, and Misunderstandings**

### **#1. Falls from a ladder aren't high enough to seriously hurt or kill you**

Most people think of fatal falls as occurring from extreme heights like high-rise buildings and bridges. While falls in these situations *can* be deadly, 92% of fatal and lost time accident falls occur from a height of 10' or less.

### **#2. Step ladders can be used as straight ladders**

OSHA requires that ladders only be used for the purpose for which they were designed, and step ladders are specifically designed to be used with all four feet on the ground.

You may have also noticed that the steps on a step ladder are only level when all four feet are on the ground. OSHA requires that rungs, cleats and steps must be level when the ladder is in use, so that pretty well rules out leaning your step ladder against the wall and climbing it!

Beyond the requirements, take a minute to think about the feet on a step ladder. Instead of pivoting like an extension ladder, a step ladder's feet are fixed, meaning that there's nothing to stop the step ladder from slipping out from under you if used improperly as a straight ladder.

### **#3. Ladders can be stored in direct sunlight**

Flower blooms in the springtime are a beautiful thing, but fiber bloom on your ladder can mean trouble.

Have you ever seen a fiberglass ladder with lots of tiny, shiny fibers visible on the surface? That's called fiber bloom and occurs when a ladder has suffered damage from prolonged exposure to the sun.

Fiber bloom can eventually make your ladder brittle, but in the short term, it means painful and itchy fibers in your hand, and more seriously, a ladder that can absorb moisture and become electrically conductive. A conductive ladder can lead to a nasty shock or even electrocution if it contacts electricity while you're on it.

To prolong your ladder's lifespan, hang it up in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight.

### **#4. Ladders don't need regular care or maintenance**

Okay, maybe you don't really think this is true, but it's amazing how many people act like it's true. The fact is, just like any other tool, a ladder needs regular care in order to work properly.

Before grabbing that ladder and getting to work, take a few minutes to inspect it. Dirty or caked steps and rungs should be cleaned to prevent slipping hazards. Oil and grease on siderails and steps not only make ladders slippery, they could make a fiberglass ladder electrically conductive. Hardware should be free of corrosion and pitting, bolts should be tightened, and pivoting connections should be checked and lightly lubricated if necessary. Look for cracks, dents, or other signs of serious damage. Don't forget to check your ladder's feet for wear and tear too.

When cleaning your ladder, stay away from harsh chemicals or solvents that could damage it, and be sure to let it completely dry out before use. Always check the manufacturer's instructions for proper cleaning and care procedures.

If you find something wrong, take your ladder out of service immediately and be sure it's CLEARLY marked as damaged. Better yet, if you don't intend to send it out for repair, properly dispose of the ladder in a way that ensures no one else will try to use it.

**True Story:** After multiple people asked to borrow the tagged and obviously damaged ladder we keep on-hand as a training aid, we attached several additional signs and even blocked the steps to prevent anyone from using it.

Never underestimate people's ability to overlook ladder hazards!