

Risk Alert

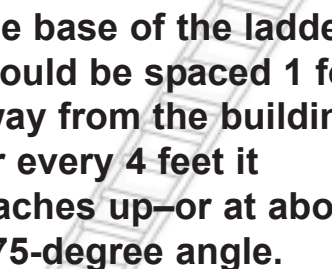


Listening. Learning. Leading.®

Ignoring ladder safety is dangerous move

Trimming trees, repairing the roof, changing a light bulb—these are but a few of the jobs at worship centers and other religious facilities that require the use of a ladder. There are many tasks performed daily with a ladder that are completed safely and successfully, but when a ladder is not used properly, serious injuries can occur.

Over a three-year period, Church Mutual Insurance Company customers reported an average of 80 workers' compensation claims involving employees who suffered injuries related to the use of ladders. Many more injuries involving volunteer workers at religious organizations are also reported.



The base of the ladder should be spaced 1 foot away from the building for every 4 feet it reaches up—or at about a 75-degree angle.

Injuries normally occur when ladders are used incorrectly

Simple safety practices could have prevented these serious injuries:

- An employee at a church was standing on the top rung of an extension ladder attempting to hand an item to another employee who was standing on the roof of the church. Without anything to hold on to, the employee on the ladder lost his balance and fell 12 feet to the ground severely injuring both ankles.
- A volunteer at a house of worship was attempting to clean gutters while using a ladder on uneven ground. When the volunteer was near the top of the ladder, the bottom of the ladder slid away from the building. The elderly volunteer fell seriously injuring his ankle and shoulder.

Leading causes of ladder-related accidents

- Standing on the upper rung
- Placing the ladder on uneven ground
- Not having the ladder extended far enough to reach the walking surface
- Leaning too far to the side of the ladder while working
- Attempting to carry items up the ladder
- Not using the appropriate ladder for the job

(Over)

Basic rules for ladder safety

- The ladder should extend a minimum of 3 feet over the roofline or working surface.
- Never stand on the top three rungs of an extension ladder.
- Never exceed the load rating of the ladder. This includes the weight of the person and materials.
- Always face the ladder and keep both hands free for climbing.
- Carry tools and other materials in a tool belt or use a rope to raise and lower them.
- Use a hanger or shelf for paint cans and other tools.
- Never lean to the side of the ladder to perform a job.
- Always secure the ladder on level and solid ground.
- Be sure all locks on extension ladders are properly engaged.
- Stepladders should be securely spread open. Never use a stepladder as an extension ladder.

For a complete collection of the *Risk Alert* series, visit our website and look in the Safety Resources section.