



## Safety Tips

### Using a stepladder safely

Ladders made their first appearance on OSHA's list of ten most-cited violations in 2005. To keep workers safe when using stepladders, in particular, follow these tips from the Canadian Center for Occupational Health and Safety, Ontario.

- Use a stepladder that is about 3 feet shorter than the highest point you have to reach. This gives a wider, more stable base and places the shelf at a convenient working height.
- Open the stepladder spreaders and shelf fully.
- Check stability. Ensure all ladder feet are on a firm, level and non-slippery surface.
- Place the stepladder at right angles to the work, with either the front or back of the steps facing the work.
- Keep the stepladder close to the work.
- Avoid pushing or pulling stepladders from the side. Repeated sideways movement can make ladders wobbly

because they are weaker or less stable in those directions.

- Face the stepladder when climbing up or down. Keep your body centered between side rails. You have climbed too high if your knees are above the top of the stepladder or if you cannot maintain a handhold on the ladder.
- Maintain a firm grip. Use both hands when climbing.

### *What should you avoid when using a stepladder?*

- Do not overreach. Move the stepladder when needed.
- Do not "shift" or "walk" a stepladder when standing on it.
- Do not stand, climb or sit on the stepladder top or pail shelf.
- Do not overload. Stepladders are meant for one person.

- Do not use a stepladder as a brace or as a support for a work platform or plank.
- Do not climb a stepladder that is leaning against a wall. Use a straight ladder instead.
- Do not use stepladders on slippery surfaces.
- Do not use stepladders on soft ground where one of the stepladder's legs may sink deeper into the ground than the others.
- Do not place stepladders on boxes, unstable bases or scaffolds to gain additional height.
- Do not climb the back of a stepladder.
- Do not push or pull stepladders sideways.
- Do not use ladders in passageways, doorways, driveways or other locations where a person or vehicle can hit it. Set up suitable barriers or lock doors shut.

## FACE Value

NIOSH's Facility Assessment and Control Evaluation Reports

#03KY115

Date of Incident: July 4, 2003

### ELECTRICIAN DIES WHEN ELECTROCUTED BY 480 VOLTS

A crew of five licensed electricians was working to connect service for two air conditioning units and service for a lighting panel. The victim was pulling wires to connect two air conditioning units and service to the lighting panel. The lead electrician instructed the job foreman to throw on the breaker to the lighting service while he continued to run the wiring for the two air conditioning units. Instead, the foreman thought he was supposed to throw on the breakers for both the lighting service and the air conditioning services, which he did. The lead electrician was holding the wiring

for the air conditioning service in his hand, and was electrocuted. Upon the victim's collapse, a co-worker administered CPR. Paramedics arrived and transported the victim to a nearby hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

### TO PREVENT FUTURE OCCURRENCES OF SIMILAR INCIDENTS, EMPLOYERS SHOULD:

- Ensure employees always follow company lockout/tagout procedures.
- Ensure communication between workers is clear and precise.



### Avoid taking toxins home

Workers can carry hazardous substances home from work in a variety of ways, unwittingly exposing their families to these substances.

According to NIOSH, carrying such substances home can lead to numerous health problems, including respiratory issues, neuralgic disorders and fatal poisonings.

In the 1990s, NIOSH conducted a study on the problem of "take-home toxins." The study documented cases in 28 countries and 36 U.S. states, and covered a wide variety of materials, industries and occupations.

According to the report, workers can expose their family members to hazardous substances in a variety of ways, including:

- **Work clothes.** Beryllium, lead, pesticides and other chemicals all have been carried home on clothing. Washing machines and clothes dryers also can become contaminated, poisoning the person doing the laundry as well as contaminating other clothing items.
- **Tools and equipment.** Mercury, pesticides, PCBs and radioactive material on hand tools and other equipment have contaminated homes and vehicles.
- **Items brought home.** Bags, rags, metal drums and scrap lumber brought home from work have poisoned family members.
- **Cottage industries.** Asbestos, lead, parathion and mercury have contaminated the home where work was done on home property.
- **Worker's body.** A worker's hands can pass dangerous materials to family members.

Prevention is the best defense against bringing toxins into the home.

For those who work away from home, safe practices include the following:

- Use good safety practices to reduce exposure.
- Change clothes before leaving work.
- Leave soiled clothes at work.
- Store non-work clothes away from work clothes.
- Shower before leaving work.
- Do not take tools, packaging or similar items home.

- Launder work clothes separately.
- Prevent family members from visiting the work area.

People who work at home should follow these safe practices:

- Keep work and living areas separate.
- Keep family members out of the work area.
- Store hazardous materials properly.
- Dispose of all dangerous materials properly.
- Wash work clothes separately.

Visit NIOSH's "Take Home Toxins" Webpage at [www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/hometox](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/hometox) for more information. **S+H**

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