

RISK FACTORS: LADDERS

Things that increase your chance of falling from a ladder



Reaching to the side

If you reach to the side so that your body goes past the ladder's side rails, you can tip the ladder and fall. Keep your body within the side rails. Tie off the ladder top and bottom. Never overreach.

Handling bulky or heavy material overhead

If you're standing on a ladder doing overhead work—particularly if the work involves bulky or heavy material (such as drywall)—you're risking a fall. For this kind of job, find an alternative to working from a ladder.

Using a lot of force

When you do things such as pull wire bundles with high resistance or swing a sledge hammer, you're

applying a lot of force at one instant in time. If you're on a ladder, the reaction force on your body can throw you and the ladder off balance. Avoid doing this kind of work from a ladder—it's just too risky. Look for an alternative.

Constant-force work

When you're applying a constant force on something—such as a drill—your centre of gravity often shifts. It shifts because you start to rely on the tool as one of your points of support. You've experienced this when you "lean into" a drill. You get accustomed to leaning on the drill and you forget that you're counting on the drill for support.

Now, what happens when the drill bit reaches the end of the material and suddenly slides through? You'll be thrown off balance. If you're on a ladder, you can tip and fall. Avoid doing this kind of constant-force work from a ladder.

Muscle fatigue

Tasks that require continued or repeated reaching, a lot of force, or handling heavy material can fatigue your muscles. When your muscles are tired, you have less control over your balance, and it's harder to recover stability if you're thrown off. Take adequate breaks.

For more information on ladder safety, visit www.csa.org. 🌐

The Ministry of Labour recently identified five things that lead to ladder instability and contribute to falls. Make sure everyone on your site knows and avoids them.

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