

# DON'T FALL FOR IT!

Fact Sheet #4

## Climbing Ladders Safely

**"I started head- first and I grabbed for the trees. They said it leveled me off ...If I missed the trees, I don't know what would have happened."**

**--Glenn Stiziver, Sheet Metal Worker badly injured in fall**



**"It's a second I wish I could get back."  
-- Glenn Striziver, Sheet Metal Worker**

Almost all construction workers use portable ladders at one time or another. And most have climbed a ladder improperly at least once. You can help change that by following the OSHA regulations in the checklist below.

### Checklist for climbing a ladder:

- Face ladder going up and down
- Keep centered between rails
- Use 3-point contact
- Carry no loads
- One person at a time
- Avoid leaning, stretching, or making moves that could throw you off balance
- Stay alert when getting on or off
- No standing on top or top step of stepladder
- No standing on top 3 rungs of straight or extension ladder

# Climbing Step by Step

OSHA Regulations Made Simple

## Face Ladder Going Up & Down

When climbing any ladder, you must face it. Never turn out or away.

## Keep Centered

Follow the "belt buckle rule" by keeping your body centered within the ladder's side rails.

## Use 3-Point Contact

3-point contact means you have 2 hands and 1 foot or 1 hand and 2 feet in contact with the ladder at all times. It is the safest and most sensible way to go up and down a ladder, and you'll always be sure to have at least one hand on the ladder.

## Carry No Loads

Carry only small objects in a tool kit on your belt. You cannot carry any load that could cause you to lose your balance. Use hoists or chain falls to lift materials.

## One Person at a Time

Wait for the person who went up the ladder first to get all the way off at the top. Then you can climb. This applies when coming down the ladder, too.

## Avoid Exerting Force

To maintain stability while on the ladder, don't pull, lean, stretch, or make sudden moves. These could all cause you to lose your balance. And, never try to take a shortcut by "walking" a ladder over to a new position.

## Be aware when getting on and off

Be especially careful as you step onto and off of the ladder. To make sure you have the proper foothold at the top of the ladder, you should be able to fit your foot on the step closest to the upper landing without your toes hitting the wall.

## No standing on top or top step of stepladder

On an A-frame or stepladder, climb no higher than the second step from the top. Never climb on the cross bracing. And never sit on any step, including the top.

## No standing on top 3 rungs of straight or extension ladder

On straight or extension ladders, you can climb up only to the fourth rung from the top.



**DON'T  
FALL  
FOR IT!**

## Can you really catch yourself if you fall?

The average person's reaction time is half a second. In that time you fall 4 feet.

As you fall, gravity pulls you down and your speed quickly increases. That means your impact force increases too. And, once you start falling, chances are you will stop only when you hit a lower surface.

Still think you can catch yourself? A person who weighs about 200 pounds and falls just 6 feet will hit the ground with almost **10,000** pounds of force. That's too much for anyone's grip.