Ladder Safety

Almost everyone uses a ladder at some point. It may be a step ladder at home or a 20-foot fixed ladder on campus. In 2013, 175,790 people were injured on ladders severely enough to require a trip to the hospital. In addition, according to Injury Facts 2016, nearly 20,000 people at work were injured and 133 died due to falls from a ladder or scaffolding.

Ladder Selection
Picking a safe ladder is an important first step.
- Environment of work site.
- Ladder length.
- Weight capacity of ladder.
Remember for some jobs, it’s better to use an aerial lift or scaffolding.

Overall Proper Use of Ladders
- Inspect the ladder before each use. Check the safety requirements printed on the label.
- Do not use other objects such as boxes, barrels, scaffolds to obtain additional height.
- Wear clean, dry, slip-resistant shoes.
- Be aware of using ladders near doors which can bump the ladder. Lock the door or post signs that a ladder is being used.
- Descend immediately during inclement weather or when winds reach 20 mph or more.

Proper Care and Storage
- Clean the climbing and gripping surfaces if they have been subjected to oil, grease, or slippery materials.
- If structural damage, bent or broken side rails or missing parts are found, the ladder must be discarded or repaired by someone authorized by the ladder manufacturer to make repairs.
- Ladders exposed to excessive heat or corrosive substances may have reduced strength. Remove the ladder from service.

Climbing and Standing Techniques
- Do not step or stand on the top two rungs.
- Do not step or stand on the top cap or bucket shelf.
- When ascending or descending the ladder, always face the ladder and maintain a firm hand hold.
- Always grip ladder rungs, not side rails.
- Do not attempt to carry other objects in your hand(s) while climbing/descending. Use tool belts or get help.
- Use 3 points of contact on the ladder at all times, 2 feet and 1 hand or 2 hands and 1 foot.
- Never jump off a ladder.

Extension Ladder Setup and Placement
- Make sure the ground is level.
- Make sure the top of the ladder has firm support.
- Tie off the ladder when possible. Never lean a ladder against a window or other unstable surface.
- The angle of the ladder should be at least 1 foot away from the surface it rests against for every 4 feet of ladder height.
- A ladder should extend at least 3 feet over the top of the structure if it is being used for roof access.
- Use only fiberglass ladders when there are power lines and electrical hazards.

Prohibited Items
- Do not use extension ladders greater than 60 feet.
- Do not use metal ladders near electrical work.
- Do not carry items in hands while ascending/descending the ladder.
- Do not use rolling ladders without wheel locks/chocks.
- Do not lean too far or overreach.
- Do not use a damaged or unsafe ladder.

Additonal Resources
- American Ladder Institute: http://www.americanladderinstitute.org/
- Occupational Safety & Health Administration: http://www.osha.com/