

Toolbox Talks 2

093: Unsafe Conditions: Ladders

Discussion leader duties for this session:

Review the company's ladder safety policies. Note what sizes and types of ladders are available on this job.

What this Safety Talk covers:

This Safety Talk addresses unsafe conditions related to ladders.

Discussion notes:

Some ladder facts to think about

- A large percentage of injuries to electricians happen while using ladders.
- Many unsafe acts with ladders are done in an attempt to compensate a condition that is also unsafe. Correct the condition, instead.
- Many ladder safety practices apply to both stationary and portable ladders.

Unsafe conditions involving ladders

- Weight limit of ladder insufficient for the intended load. Change the load or change the ladder. Never exceed the weight limit of the ladder.
- The ladder isn't securely set. Portable ladders need to be set in place so they don't slip. For a step ladder, ensure it's on a level and stable surface so it won't tilt. For an extension ladder, ensure the feet won't move. You can stabilize the feet by any of several methods. For example, you can dig holes for them. Or you can place heavy sacks of landscaping materials, if available, against them.
- The ladder is just shy of where it needs to be. This is why people reach too far to one side. Get down and reposition the ladder so that you don't have to reach.
- The extension ladder is set up wrong. You'll probably find usage rules printed directly on the ladder. If not, follow standard ladder setup rules to get the correct angle and length. To get the correct angle: one foot horizontal for every four feet of vertical. To get the correct length: extend three feet beyond the destination elevation.
- Ladder set up in trafficway. You may not be able to avoid this. If possible, rope the area off. It's common for people to walk around in a daze. Don't count on them to notice the ladder and walk around it. Have another person on the ground directing people. Try to time the work for low traffic periods.
- Another person gets on your ladder. Tell that person to get off the ladder, unless the reason for being there is an emergency.
- No means exists for hoisting tools or materials. The unsafe act in response to this is carrying those items up the ladder. Instead, rig up a hoisting means. You can do that with just a bucket and rope. If nothing is available for rigging up a lifting means, contact your foreman. The job will proceed faster if you have the proper means for safely raising tools and materials, than if you fall and break your back.
- Items hanging from ladder rungs. Remove any such items. They're slipping hazards.
- The only available ladder is aluminum. Don't even think of an aluminum ladder as a ladder. Just pretend it's not there. Using such a ladder, which is essentially one big conductor, is unsafe.

Review and discussion

1. What's a reason for many of the unsafe acts that are done with ladders?
2. If a ladder's welded in place, instead of portable, do ladder safety rules apply? If so, what might a few of these be? *[Note to Presenter: Don't carry things up ladders. One person on a ladder at a time. Don't hang things from ladders.]*
3. What should you do if the ladder isn't rated for the intended load? *[Note to Presenter: This seems obvious, but this particular rule is frequently broken.]*
4. Why should you ensure a ladder is securely set? What are some ways to do this?
5. What's the key to preventing the unsafe act of "reaching" while on a ladder?
6. How do you get the correct angle and length on an extension ladder?
7. If you have to do ladder work in a trafficway, what are some ways to make that safer?
8. What do you do if someone climbs behind you while you're still on the ladder?
9. If there's no means for hoisting materials, is it OK to just carry them up with you?
10. Why should you consider the phrase "aluminum ladder" a conflict of terms? If the job's on a tight schedule and the only available ladder is aluminum, what should you do? What if it will only take a minute? *[Note to Presenter: Electricians do not use portable aluminum ladders. Period.]*

Participant's Signature and Date

[illegible]