

Ladder Safety

The salmon uses fish-ladders to get over rapids or small dams in streams during their spawning runs. They're not concerned with safety but are motivated by instinct to leap the water steps.

We humans often approach ladders in the same manner as fish. We leap carelessly onto the ladder, disregarding its placement or condition. This procedure is o.k. for salmon, because many of them are on their last trip when they hit the ladders – and we could be too, unless we employ proper safety measures.

A very important factor in ladder safety is the correct placement of the ladder. The safest angle to position a straight ladder can easily be determined. The distance from the base of the ladder to the wall should be equal to one-fourth the distance from the base to the point of support.

After properly setting the ladder at the correct angle, the safest way to climb it is to face the ladder. The same thing applies when descending. Use both hands when climbing or descending. Always use at least one hand to hold on when working from a ladder.

One unsafe practice that is very common is overreaching, particularly when painting or working on some project which gets progressively farther from the ladder. The only safe way to handle this situation is to descend the ladder and move it to the correct spot.

All ladders should have non-skid shoes and be placed on a level surface. Never use a box or other object to increase the ladder height. Only one person should be on a ladder at a time. Discussions should be held on the ground. The top of the straight ladder should extend three feet above the topmost support point. Never stand above the third rung from the top. Tie off the top and bottom of the ladder. On a stepladder, never stand above the third highest step and don't use the stepladder as a straight ladder.

Keep ladders in good condition by using an inspection program. Rungs should be kept clear of foreign substances like grease. Be aware of others, so you can protect yourself from their unsafe acts. If working near a doorway, lock or barricade the door so the ladder isn't bumped by someone opening the door.

Metal ladders are fine, but you must ensure that the ladder and the person using the ladder will not come in contact with electric wires or equipment. We all have a pretty good idea of what can happen in a ladder accident, so let's do everything possible to prevent one.

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