



step up

Most of us need to use a ladder at some time or another, whether to wash a window, trim an overhanging tree, or simply to clean the gutters. However, taking on even a simple chore on a ladder can result in serious injury, unless you adopt a few commonsense safety procedures.

We have traditionally been a nation of do-it-yourselfers. We tend not to use a tradesperson if we think we can tackle a job on our own. However, if you're not good with heights and you're not confident about climbing up a ladder, let alone setting up and then venturing up an extension ladder – then DON'T.

If you can't afford to pay someone to climb up the ladder and do the job for you, then think laterally about exchanging your own services or skills to get the job done. An offer of an evening's babysitting or a casserole as a swap with a friend or neighbour for clearing the leaves from a second-storey guttering? Why not?

So, remember:

- > Don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it. Get someone to hold the ladder in position while you climb.
- > If you're using a new ladder, read the manufacturer's instructions first.
- > Inspect the ladder:
 - Check for any loose screws.
 - Check that the ladder rungs are dry before stepping on them.
 - Ensure your metal ladder has slip-resistant feet.
- > Use the right ladder for the job. Plenty of accidents are caused by someone using a ladder that's too short.
- > Place the ladder on firm, level ground and ensure that the safety locks are engaged, so the ladder doesn't slide out of position.
- > Keep the area around the bottom of the ladder free of clutter.
- > Ensure that the ladder is well clear of power lines and electrical equipment.
- > Wear slip-resistant shoes.
- > There should only be one person on a ladder at a time.
- > Face the ladder when climbing up or down.

> Keep your weight evenly distributed. Climb in the centre of the ladder, hold the side rails with both hands and keep your belt buckle within the sides of the ladder.

> Never leave a raised ladder unattended.

Extension ladders

> Extend an extension ladder at least a metre beyond the top surface the ladder is resting on.

> Don't place the ladder at too extreme an angle – three up, one out is safe.

DON'T

> Don't use a damaged ladder. It's not worth the risk.

> Don't over-extend your reach.

> Don't climb onto the top step of a ladder.

> Don't use a step ladder as an extension ladder.

> Don't use a ladder in high winds or in an electrical storm.

> Don't use a ladder as a seat between your chores – it's not designed to carry your weight for long periods.


If you fall off a ladder

Don't panic. Evaluate the situation as calmly as you can and decide if you're hurt. If you don't think that you've broken any bones, get up slowly. Even if you are mobile, if you have hit your head, go and get yourself checked out as soon as possible. If you believe an injury has occurred that stops you from standing or walking, shout for help. If you have a cellphone handy call 111 in New Zealand or 000 in Australia, or contact a friend or neighbour for assistance. In fact, always keep your cellphone handy if you are using a ladder when there is no one else around.

To find out more about using your ladder safely, visit:

www.consumeraffairs.govt.nz/productsafety/consumerinfo/laddersafety.html

or email: ladders@nacl.co.nz. **H**

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