

Orchard Ladder Safety

Orchard ladders cause many serious incidents on farms each year, mostly because workers do not take time to use the ladders properly. Choose high-quality, well-constructed ladders and match the ladder to the kind of work to be performed.

TRUE STORY

After the owner of a pear orchard hired 20 harvesters to pick fruit, his supervisor issued picking bags and ladders to the harvesters. Because it was urgent to pick fruit, the supervisor skipped the usual morning safety meeting and sent the crew straight to work.

As workers moved around the pear tree, one of them stood on the top rung reaching for the fruit. Not taking the time to move the ladder, he overreached, lost his balance, and fell 12 feet, suffering a broken ankle.

What could have prevented this accident?

- Train harvesters to use an orchard ladder.
- Supervise the harvesting crew continually. Correct unsafe acts or conditions immediately.

Ladder Safety Tips

- Select a ladder of proper length to reach working heights.
- Inspect ladders before each use. Check that all working parts are in good working order. Never climb a bent or broken ladder.
- Confirm ladder steps are level, and that the third leg is stable and positioned straight away from the center line of the ladder.
- Never place a metal ladder near electrical wires. Stay at least 10 feet from voltage line.
- Never leave a ladder set up and unattended if children are nearby.
- Avoid ladders if you:
 - tire easily;
 - have fainting spells;
 - use medication or alcohol; or

- are physically handicapped in a way that makes ladder use difficult.

EMPLOYER/EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Employer:

- Purchase ladders of proper length to reach working heights. Select ladders designed for the work to be performed.
- Establish and enforce ladder safety rules.
- Train employees to use ladders properly, including inspections, set-ups, climbing, and descending.
- Develop a system to inspect ladders periodically.

Employee:

- Inspect the ladder upon receipt and before each use. Make sure all rivets, joints, nuts, and bolts are tightened, and that feet, steps, and rungs are secure.
- Keep ladder clean and free from grease or mud. Clean your shoes before using ladder.
- Never make temporary repairs to damaged or missing parts. Report all damaged ladders to your supervisor.
- Never set a ladder near electrical wires.
- Never use a ladder on hard or slippery surfaces. Use orchard ladders for orchard use only.
- Face the ladder when climbing up or down. Center your body between side rails.
- Maintain a firm grip. Use both hands while climbing ladders.
- Do not overreach; instead, move the ladder as needed. Never walk (or jog) the ladder when standing on it.
- Do not stand on the top two steps. Do not sit on the top rung.
- Limit one person to a ladder at a time.
- Avoid pushing or pulling off the side of the ladder.
- Secure ladders properly while in transit.
- Never jump from a ladder.
- Never support a ladder on tree branches. Keep both feet on the ladder at all times.

Zenith provides workplace safety resources at: **TheZenith.com**[®]