**General Precautions**

- Only use ladders and appropriate accessories (ladder levelers, jacks, or hooks) for their designed purposes.
- Do not place a ladder on boxes, barrels, or other unstable bases to obtain additional height.
- Do not move or shift a ladder while a person or equipment is on the ladder.
- Use a ladder only on a stable and level surface, unless it has been secured (top or bottom) to prevent displacement.
- A ladder placed in any location where it can be displaced by other work activities must be secured to prevent displacement or a barricade must be erected to keep traffic away from the ladder.

- Do not use a self-supporting ladder (e.g., step ladder) as a single ladder or in a partially closed position.

- Read and follow all labels/markings on the ladder.

- Do not exceed the maximum load rating of a ladder. Be aware of the ladder’s load rating and of the weight it is supporting, including the weight of any tools or equipment.

- Always maintain 3-points (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand) contact on the ladder when climbing.

- Keep your body near the middle of the step and always face the ladder while climbing.

- An extension or straight ladder used to access an elevated surface must extend at least 3 feet above the point of support.

- Do not stand on the three top rungs of a straight, single, or extension ladder.

- The proper set-up angle is to place the ladder base 1/4 of the working length of the ladder from the wall or other vertical surface.

- Be sure that all spreaders and locks are properly engaged.

- Look for overhead power lines before handling a ladder.

- Do not use a metal ladder near power lines or exposed electrical equipment.

Learn more: Complete [Ladder Safety](#) training and review the [March 2019](#) and [September 2017](#) Spotlights on Safety.

Questions?
Contact Environmental Health and Safety [ehs@northwestern.edu](mailto:ehs@northwestern.edu).