



10 Tips for Ladder Safety

Each year, nearly 900 workers across Washington state are injured from falls related to ladders. The risk grows during the holidays when many workers hang lights and other seasonal decorations, or take them down come January.

The combination of workers doing tasks they normally do not do, along with an all too often careless approach to ladder safety, can lead to the worst holiday ever. Falls from ladders have resulted in permanent disability and even death.

L&I inspectors often cite employers for ladder safety violations related to holiday decorating, including workers hanging decorations from elevated platforms without fall protection, workers standing on top of ladders and other cases of improper ladder use.

L&I reminds employers that state law ([Chapter 296-876 WAC](#)) requires they train workers who must use ladders how to use them and how to recognize ladder hazards.

Here are 10 tips for ladder safety when hanging decorations:

- Carefully inspect the ladder for defects, checking for cracks, corrosion and that bolts and rivets are secure. Tag and remove unsafe ladders from service.
- Make sure the ladder's feet work properly and have slip-resistant pads.
- Use a fiberglass ladder if there is any chance of contact with electricity.
- When setting the ladder, look for a safe location with firm, level footing and rigid support for the top of the ladder. Be sure to set it at an angle per the manufacturer's guidance.
- When climbing off a ladder at an upper level, make sure the ladder extends 3 feet above the landing.
- When climbing the ladder, use three points of contact — keep 1 hand and both feet or both hands and 1 foot in contact with the ladder at all times.
- Never carry any load that could cause you to lose balance.
- Never stand on top of a ladder.
- Don't pull, lean, stretch or make sudden moves on a ladder that could cause it to tip over. A scaffold or other safe working surface may be a better choice for your task.
- Avoid setting the ladder near exit doors, near the path of pedestrian or vehicular traffic.