

Orchard Ladder Safety

Every year, workers in fruit orchards are injured from falls off orchard ladders. When climbing ladders, it's easy to forget about safety precautions, simply because we do it so often. However, there are more than 500,000 falls from ladders annually, and approximately 300 of those falls end up being fatal. These accidents can be easily avoided by implementing just a few safety rules before ascending.

The orchard ladder differs from a typical construction ladder, in that it's a tripod. The main base of the ladder is called the "side rails," and a third leg that stands out from the side rails forms the tripod. This design makes it more practical and sturdier in orchard conditions, but makes it impractical for use on hard surfaces.

- Select the appropriate length of ladder for the height of the trees you'll be picking from
 - Be sure to always be aware of any overhead power lines or other hazards before setting up the ladder
- Inspect the ladder for broken rungs, and loose screws prior to use
 - If you find the ladder is broken, mark it with a tag identifying it should not be used and place it away from other ladders to either be repaired or disposed of

- Never lean the ladder against the tree you'll be working on
- Place the ladder on firmly on the soil and be sure it's not standing on any rocks or debris
- Unfold the third leg and place it firmly on the ground. To ensure the ladder is at the correct angle, place your feet at the base of the ladder with your arms stretched straight out in front of you with your fingertips able to touch the side rails
- Always maintain 3 points of contact with the ladder using two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand
- Keep your body in the middle of the ladder and always stay facing it while ascending or descending
- Do not lean off the ladder. Climb down and reposition the ladder if you need to be closer
- Only one person should be on the ladder at a time
- Do not stand above the top two steps
- When climbing down, take your time and don't skip steps

For More Information: