

According to NIOSH, each year in the U.S., more than 500,000 people are treated and about 300 people die from ladder-related injuries.

The inspection of a ladder is a very important step to avoid serious or even deadly injuries. Regardless if the ladder is fixed, or portable, OSHA requires that employers ensure ladders are inspected regularly. However, even with regular inspections it is still part of every worker's job to be sure that the ladder they are about to use is in safe working order.

Follow the safety precautions in this safety topic to help avoid a few of the potential errors that lead to many ladder safety incidents. And remember, always use the ladder as intended and follow all manufacturer's warnings for the specific type of ladder you are going to use!

OSHA Standard 1910.27(f) *All ladders shall be maintained in a safe condition. All ladders shall be inspected regularly, with the intervals between inspections being determined by use and exposure.*



*Individual pointing to the manufacturer's safety labels and warnings on the ladder. Ladder inspections should include making sure that labels are readable and haven't been painted over or damaged. (*1)*

- Always visually inspect ladder feet to ensure that foot pads and feet assembly are present and in safe condition. Damaged or missing foot pads can cause you to slip or lose balance and suffer a deadly fall.



Extension ladder missing foot assembly and foot pads. This appears to be the top portion of an extension ladder that has been taken apart.



*Damaged footpad/assembly on this step ladder was poorly taped over in a bad attempt to fix the ladder. (*2)*

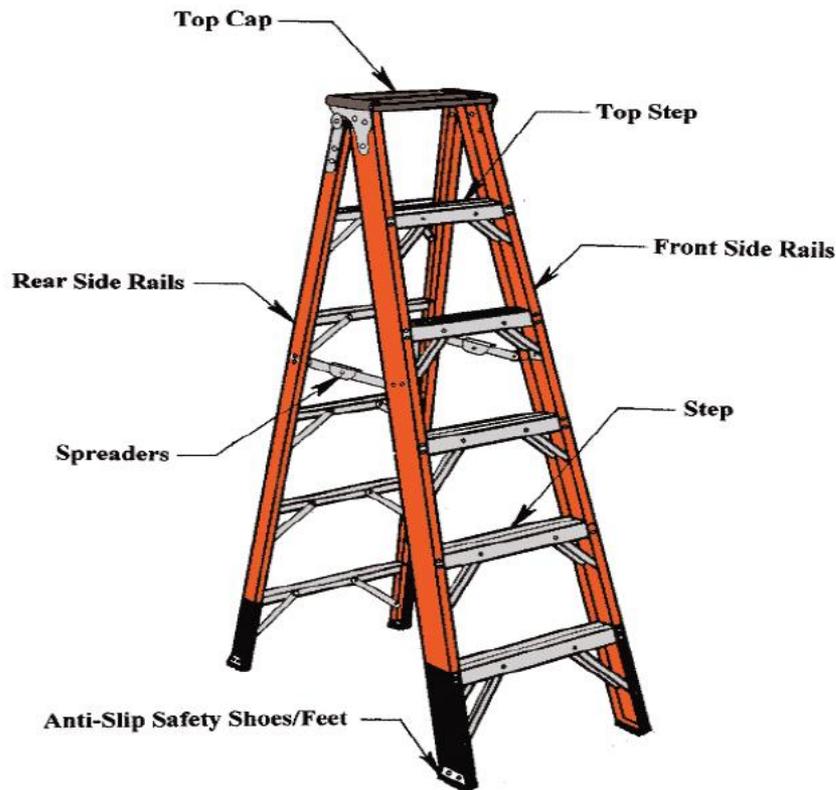
- Never attempt to repair a ladder! Do not use wire, screws, bolts, duct tape or electrical tape as a way to fix the ladder; instead tag it and remove it from service.

OSHA Standard 1910.23(b)(10) Any ladder with structural or other defects is immediately tagged "Dangerous: Do Not Use" or with similar language.

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- Inspect the top cap, all steps, side rails, and locking braces on a step ladder before using.
- Loose locking braces or spreaders can cause the ladder to wobble and become unstable.
- Mud, grease, or dirt on the steps or rungs of a ladder can lead to a slip and fall when climbing up or down the ladder.



OSHA Fact Sheet #3662. (*3)



Close up view of wooden ladder rails and spreaders. Note: rails and spreaders appear to be worn and rusted and should be removed from service and tagged "Do Not Use". (*4)



Inspect fixed ladders for missing rungs, bolts, burrs, or other deformities before use. (*5)

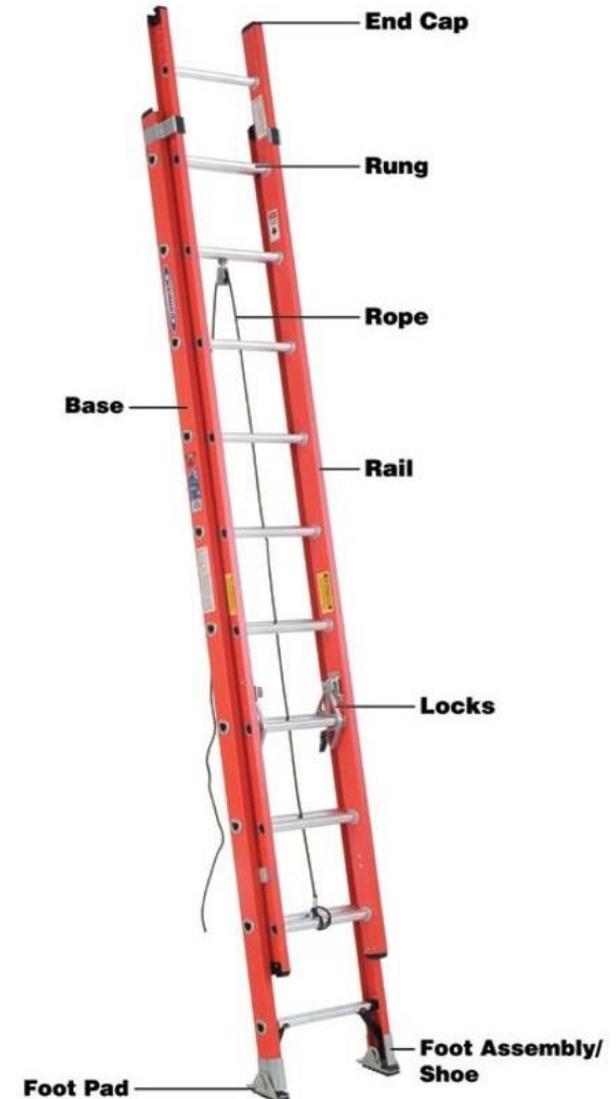
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- Inspect the rungs, rails, lock (dawgs), rope, and pulley assembly of an extension ladder and be sure that all parts work properly.
- It is very important to make certain that the rope and pulley are working and that the ladder locks (dawgs) do not slip!



*Close up view of ladder rungs and rope. (*6)*



*OSHA Fact Sheet #3660 (*7)*

Remember these important safety tips when inspecting ladders to help prevent injuries!

- Ladder inspections should include making sure that labels are readable and haven't been painted over or damaged.
- Always visually inspect ladder feet to ensure that foot pads and feet assembly are present and in safe condition.
- Never attempt to repair a ladder! Contact the manufacturer or other qualified person to make the repair.
- Inspect the top cap, all steps, side rails, and locking braces on a step ladder before using.
- Inspect the rungs, rails, lock (dawgs), rope, and pulley assembly of an extension ladder and be sure that all parts work properly.
- Check the rungs and steps for mud, grease, or dirt to avoid potential slip/fall hazards.
- Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for proper inspection and use of the specific ladder.
- Remove any ladder from service that is found to be defective!



*Notice the paint and grime covering the labels and steps of this ladder. It should be removed from service and cleaned to avoid a potential safety hazard. (*8)*

OSHA Standard 1910.23(b)(9) *Ladders are inspected before initial use in each work shift, and more frequently as necessary, to identify any visible defects that could cause employee injury.*

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