

Spot The Safety Violation: Stay Safe Hanging Holiday Decorations



How did the man in this cartoon end up in such a precarious position?



The holidays should be a happy time of the year. But hanging decorations 'whether in the workplace or at home' can be a dangerous activity, especially if you're using a ladder.

The man in the cartoon from the Evergreen Safety Council is literally hanging on by a thread. How did he end up in this situation?

Perhaps he didn't ensure that the ladder was on a flat, firm, non-icy surface. Maybe he was standing on the very top rung of the ladder or overreached while on it. Or someone may have tried to move the ladder while he was on it or opened a nearby door and knocked the ladder over.

Regardless of the cause, clearly the man needs some tips on ladder safety. Share the following dos and don'ts with your workers and remind them to use ladders safely both on the job and at home.

14 DOS & DON'TS OF SAFE PORTABLE LADDER USE

When using portable ladders, workers **SHOULD**:

1. Try to maintain three points of contact with the ladder at all times.
2. Carry tools in a tool belt or raise and lower them with a hand line.
3. Ensure that their shoes/boots are clean and have slip-free soles.
4. Face the ladder and stand in the centre of the side rails.
5. Secure the ladder from moving or have a co-worker hold it.
6. Ensure the legs of a step ladder are fully extended and locked in place.
7. Make sure they and their materials don't exceed the ladder's load limit.

But workers **SHOULD NOT**:

1. Work from either of the top two rungs, steps or cleats or the bucket/pail shelf of a portable ladder unless the manufacturer's specifications allow the worker to do so.
2. Carry heavy or bulky objects or any other object that may make going up or down the ladder unsafe.
3. Splice or lash ladders together to extend their length.
4. Place ladders in front of or against a door unless the door is blocked in the open position, locked or otherwise guarded.
5. Use a ladder as scaffold flooring, support for scaffold flooring or a horizontal walkway.
6. Place a ladder on a box, barrel or other unstable base.
7. Move a ladder while someone is on it.

To further ensure that your workers safely use portable ladders:

- Train them on the requirements under the OHS laws for portable ladders and your safety rules for such equipment.
- Quiz workers to ensure they understood their ladder training.
- Require workers to inspect ladders before using them to ensure that they're in good condition.

HOLIDAY LIGHTS SAFETY TIPS

Of course, holiday decorations, especially the lights, can create hazards even after they've been safely hung. Here are some tips from the Ontario government to help you avoid injuries and electrical fires this holiday season:

- Check for frayed or damaged electrical cords, light strings and extension cords.
- Always buy electrical products that have a recognized certification mark like 'CSA' (from the Canadian Standards Association) on the package.
- Don't overload electrical outlets with plugs and extension cords.
- Make sure you hang lights where they're meant to be—that is, hang outdoor lights outside and indoor lights inside.
- Read the manufacturer's instructions before installing holiday lights and decorations.
- Stay clear of power lines when decorating outdoors. (Take these four steps to protect workers around overhead power lines.)
- Remove lights as soon as you can after the holiday season; they're not designed for year-round use.