SaferMe

Ladder safety toolbox talk

A simple, 5 minute outline of what to cover in a toolbox talk on Ladder safety.

As the person in charge of a construction worksite, it's up to you to reinforce best practices for ladder safety in the workplace. A ladder safety toolbox talk can be a great way of getting that done. If you're having trouble figuring out how to run a ladder safety toolbox talk, the topics covered in this article can help you get started.

Choosing the Right Ladder For the Job

Ladder choice is an essential ladder safety toolbox talk example you should cover in your session. You don't want workers doing is climbing anything with height to it while trying to accomplish a task. Not only does that violate Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) rules, but it puts all crew members at risk, especially when working at height. If a ladder is necessary, here's what workers should consider before making a final selection:

1. Ladder Material

Ladders are typically made from wood, fiberglass, or aluminum. If you're on a construction site, you're better off with a ladder made from aluminum or fiberglass. One of the advantages of aluminum ladders is that they're lighter and easier to maneuver around. That makes a big difference when you're walking back and forth between people around a worksite. However, if you're working in a place with electrical sources, you'd be better off with a fiberglass ladder since they don't conduct electricity.

2. Ladder Height

Next, you want to make sure that the ladder is tall enough for the task at hand. It's better to have a ladder that's the correct height versus trying to make do with whatever ladder you can locate. If you're going to use an extension ladder, pick one that goes at least seven feet higher than the maximum contact point. That way, your workers can set the ladder up at the correct angle. If you're using a stepladder, the reach height should be four feet above the height of the stepladder in use.

3. Ladder Duty Rating

Make sure that a ladder can hold any necessary weight by checking its duty rating. Any ladder used on a worksite should have a sticker highlighting its duty rating attached to the side. In addition, workers should account for factors like body weight, clothing, protective equipment, and any tools they will have with them while using the ladder.

Setting Up a Ladder

Before setting foot on the ladder, check it over for any structural defects like:

- Broken or missing rungs
- Cracked side rails
- Corrosion of components
- Other defective components

If you notice any issues that could impact the safety of workers, remove the ladder from the worksite and have it sent for repair or disposal. You don't want anyone using a ladder that could lead to a serious injury or even death.

Workers should set ladders up in places where there isn't a lot of traffic. However, if it's a busy site, they should set up barricades that prevent anyone from accidentally jostling them while using a ladder.

Crew members must position ladders at an angle most conducive to providing them with stability as they finish the task at hand. The rule for extension ladders is to set the base 1 foot away from a structure for every four feet of ladder height. That way, workers can achieve a 75-degree working angle.

Make sure your crew members understand the importance of setting up ladders on a level, stable surface. If that's hard to do, they should use a leveling device instead of stacking objects beneath the ladder legs.

Working on a Ladder

Another ladder safety toolbox talk example you should go over is how to handle working on a ladder. Crew members should maintain three points of contact while working on top of a ladder. They can achieve using body parts like the hands, knees, and feet. Make sure workers fasten their belt buckle between the ladder's side rail center their body. In addition, crew members should face the ladder whenever they climb up and down.

Workers should never stand any higher on a stepladder than two steps down from the top. For an extension ladder, they should never go higher than four rungs from the top. In addition, crew members should avoid using ladders if the current weather conditions include rain, strong winds, or the possibility of lightning.

Position step stools as close as possible to the object the worker needs to reach. A worker can tell whether a step stool is suitable for the job by how much they have to strain to reach an object. If the crew member is constantly on their toes, they should switch to a ladder.

Importance of Toolbox Talks

As you can see, there's a lot to consider when it comes to ladder safety, even for the most experienced construction professionals. Regular toolbox talks can help you protect workers and ensure your job site remains in compliance with local, state, and federal safety standards.