

## NEWSLETTER SPRING 2007



When Old Man Winter calls it quits for the year, people all across the world climb ladders to spruce up the exterior of their homes, examine gutters, paint and perform other tasks associated with spring cleaning. While working around the house can be very rewarding, hundreds of thousands of injuries occur each year as a result of mishaps related to electric tools, ladders and lawn mowers.

- On average about 220,000 people make emergency room visits due to ladder mishaps each year.
- More than 87,000 people are treated annually in hospital emergency rooms for lawn mower injuries – casualties of burns, dismemberment, electric shock, falls and thrown objects.

Another 76,000 people sustain injuries from power garden tools such as trimmers, lawn edgers and pruners. Safety experts recommend these guidelines for ladder use:



- Follow the use instructions and warning labels found on ladders. These instructions help you choose the proper ladder for the job and describe ladder weight and height limits.
- Use fiberglass ladders whenever there is a possibility of working near electricity or overhead power lines.
- Before you step on the first rung, inspect the ladder. Ensure the rungs are clean, dry, and the ladder is sturdy. Never climb on a slippery or shaky ladder.
- Keep the ladder on a firm, level surface. Don't set the ladder on uneven, soft or muddy ground.
- Remember the 4-to-1 rule. For every 4 feet of ladder height, the bottom of the ladder should be 1 foot away from the wall or object it is leaning against. For example, a 16-foot ladder should have its base 4 feet from the wall.
- On a stepladder, ensure that the spreaders, the devices that hold the front and back sections in an open position, are completely open and locked before you put any weight on the ladder.
- Always use the right height ladder. On a stepladder, don't stand on the bucket shelf. For an extension ladder, make sure it extends 3 feet over the roofline or working surface and that it is not set at too steep an angle.
- Don't overextend your reach. Move the ladder to new positions as your work progresses.
- Never exceed the ladder's weight limit, otherwise known as the maximum load rating. That means only one person on the ladder at a time.
- Don't carry equipment in your hands while you climb a ladder. Invest in a tool belt or have someone hand the equipment to you.
- Face the ladder when climbing up and down; keep your body weight centered and evenly distributed between the side rails.
- Never move a ladder while standing on it. Always make sure people and equipment are off the ladder before moving or closing it.
- If you have to use the ladder in front of a door, ensure that door is locked or being watched by someone. Never leave a raised ladder unattended.