

The Firefighter's Safety Bulletin



October 2008

Welcome to The Firefighter's Safety Bulletin!

The Firefighter's Safety Bulletin is published for members of the Comp Alliance with fire and EMS departments. The intent of this bulletin is to help our members identify and control the leading job related hazards arising from firefighting, rescue, emergency service operations and other related activities.

This issue addresses methods to reduce the risk of injury arising from hose malfunction.

The Firefighter's Safety Bulletin is written by Al Turi, Chief of Safety, (Ret.), FDNY. We thank Chief Turi for his valuable contribution to our safety efforts!



**New York State
Municipal Workers'
Compensation
Alliance**

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Portable Ladder Safety

The majority of injuries sustained while using portable ladders consist of sprains and strains. Always try to utilize two people whenever transporting, raising, and/or operating portable ladders. This one rule alone can dramatically reduce the risk of soft tissue injuries.



The following points are offered with the intent of reducing injuries involving portable ladders:

- ✓ Whenever possible use an extension ladder. It is the most versatile and the height can be adjusted for **safe** and accurate positioning. Choosing the correct ladder length becomes less critical when using an extension ladder contrary to when using a straight ladder, which has a fixed length.
- ✓ Placing the ladder at approximately a 65-75 degree angle will optimize the ladder's maximum strength. A lower angle can reduce the load capacity and **lead to failure**. A higher angle can be unsafe because the climber is forced to rely mostly on balance which increases the chance of falling. Injuries resulting from falls are usually very serious and can injure the person butting the ladder as well.

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- ✓ A simple formula can be used to obtain a 75-degree angle. Place the base of the ladder at a distance equal to 1/4 of the distance from the base of the ladder to the top of its support. Ex: if the tip of a ladder rests on a windowsill that is 20ft. high, then the butt of the ladder should be 5ft. from the building.

SAFE CLIMBING PRACTICES

- ✓ Keep your spine between the beams and your feet on each side of the centerline.
- ✓ Resist the temptation to over-reach. It is always **safer** to get down and move the ladder and avoid an injury.
- ✓ Hands hold **the underside of the beams**, not the rungs. You slide your hands up or down as you climb or descend. They should never lose contact with the ladder.
- ✓ Always utilize the services of a member at the base of the ladder to prevent it from moving.
- ✓ Never climb higher than the third rung from the top of a ladder.
- ✓ Never place a ladder against a surface that may break or collapse. Ex: window pains or sash.
- ✓ When operating from a ladder for an extended period, use a safety belt to secure yourself. At the very least use a leg lock when warranted.

**Remember to think about the task at hand, plan your movements, and utilize sufficient manpower for safety.



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We hope you found this issue of *The Firefighter's Safety Bulletin* informative and useful. If you wish to obtain additional copies, make comments, or suggestions for future topics, please contact:

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