

Use Ladders with Care

Improper use of a ladder can be extremely dangerous. Many volunteers who assist in stage set up, prop management, and scenery design don't know how to use a ladder safely. The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons offers these guidelines to share with your volunteers:

- Before climbing a ladder, make sure the locks are secured and the bottom and top of the ladder rails are on firm surfaces. Make sure shoe soles are clean so they don't slip off the ladder rungs. Don't wear leather-soled shoes—they can be slippery. Shoelaces should be securely tied. Make sure shoelaces and pant legs are not so long that they extend under shoes and cause a person to slip.
- Face the ladder while climbing and stay in the center of the rails. Grip both rails securely while climbing. Don't lean over the side of the ladder. Always keep at least three-point contact on a ladder at all times (two hands and one foot, or one hand and both feet.)
- Never stand on the top rung of any ladder. On single or extension ladders, never stand above the third rung from the top and never climb above the point where the ladder touches the wall or vertical support.
- On stepladders, never stand on the paint shelf, spreaders, or back section.
- Don't overreach; it's safer to move the ladder to a new location when needed. Don't try to jog or walk the ladder to a new location while standing on it. Climb down and reposition the ladder.
- Don't overload a ladder— it's meant to be used by only one person at a time.
- Don't use any ladder if you tire easily, or if you are subject to fainting spells, taking medications that make you dizzy or drowsy, or drinking alcohol.

If you have a safety or risk management question or a suggestion for a topic, please contact Markel's Risk Management Department at safety1st@markelcorp.com.