



## FALL PREVENTION ALLIANCE TOOLBOX TALK ON

# THREE POINT CLIMBING SAFETY

Company: \_\_\_\_\_ Job Site Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Finish Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Foreman/Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Whether climbing or descending ladders, equipment, climbing rungs, or steep angle steps, a three point contact climbing technique is essential for safety. We do not usually consider a mundane task such as climbing a ladder to be a dangerous feat, however, falls from ladders alone is the twelfth leading cause of on-the-job deaths in the United States. Falls account for hundreds of deaths, and thousands of injuries every year. Climbing to any height on a vertical, or nearly vertical structure is a hazard worthy of the same safety techniques used by mountain and rock climbers to scale great heights. Following are guidelines to safely climb and/or descend.

**Three Point Climbing Technique:** It is common and natural when climbing to move your alternating limbs at the same time to ascend or descend. This means that you move your left leg and right arm at the same time, or vice-versa. While this may be the quickest way to climb or descend, it is not the safest way:

- By moving two limbs at the same time you only leave two points of contact on the step, rung, or ladder. This is an unstable platform from which to keep your balance or shift your weight.
- When climbing with only two points of contact if one point of contact slips, you will either be left hanging by one hand, or one foot, or you will fall.
- By moving only one limb at a time you maintain a three point contact at all times (both feet and one hand, or both hands and one foot). This is a much safer, and a much more stable position.
- If one limb (or point of contact) slips while using a three point contact, you still have at least one hand and one foot on the structure to support your weight, and can recover without harm.
- You must ensure that your three points of contact have either a firm grip or a solid purchase before moving the next hand or foot to another position.

*NOTE: When using a three point method of climbing; you cannot carry anything in your hands as it will not allow you to maintain three point contact at all times.*

### General Climbing Safety Tips:

- Employees can slip or lose their balance while climbing by over-reaching while working from a ladder.
- Use a harness or suitable fall protection to work from a climbing structure.
- Slippery substances such as grease or oil on rungs or steps can also cause slips and falls.
- There is always the hazard of a falling object from workers carrying tools or material up a ladder. Do not hand carry objects while climbing. Use a sling, harness, or tool belt to carry tools or material, or a line or hoist to raise tools or material after climbing.
- Always inspect any ladder for damage or defect prior to use. Inspect for broken or missing rungs or steps, broken or split side rails, defective or missing safety pads, corrosion, securely fitting components between steps and side rails, rungs that are free of grease and oil, and no splinters or sharp points that may snag clothing.
- Never stand on the four top rungs of a straight or extension ladder, or on the top 2 steps of a step ladder.
- Hoist tools and other material up with a lift line, after reaching the top of the ladder or structure. Use of tool belts helps to manage tools while working at heights.
- Never over-reach while working from a ladder. Work with your body within the ladder's side rails. Descend and reposition ladder as needed to stay close to work.
- Rungs or steps on metal ladders must be treated to prevent slipping. Treatment may include being corrugated, dimpled, knurled, or coated with non-skid, slip-resistant material.

**Conclusion:** If you consider how often you climb and descend, and add up the steps you make on these common means of access to higher or lower levels, you will probably find that you climb the equivalent of a small mountain throughout the course of a day. Respect the hazards of climbing and take the time to do it safely.

Through the OSHA and Houston Fall Prevention Alliance, this Toolbox Talk was developed for informational purposes only. It does not necessarily reflect the official views of OSHA or the U.S. Department of Labor. July 2016.

The Houston Fall Prevention Alliance was formed by the below organizations to provide their members, and others, with information, guidance and access to training resources that will help them protect the health and safety of workers, particularly by reducing and preventing exposure to fall hazards in the construction industries and addressing fall related issues and understand the rights of workers and the responsibilities of employers under the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act). In developing this alliance, these organizations recognize that OSHA's State Plan and On-site Consultation Project partners are an integral part of the OSHA national effort.





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