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Many of the most common accidents that occur when we use a portable step ladder can be avoided by observing the following tips:

DO's . . .

- Always inspect your portable step ladder before use, and take it out of service if there is any deficiency found that affects its safe use.
- Make sure all four feet of the portable step ladder are set on a level and stable surface, and that both ladder spreaders are fully extended and locked into place before use.
- Keep your ladder, your body, your tools and any materials at least 10 feet away from energized electrical conductors (or even further for higher voltages exceeding 50kv).
- Always make sure at least one of your hands is firmly grasping a rung or side rail when you are climbing up or down a ladder. And be aware that just sliding your hand along a side rail as you ascend or descend the ladder does NOT constitute "grasping" the ladder.
- Maintain your balance and center of gravity on your portable step ladder by keeping your belt-buckle between the two side rails. Reposition the ladder instead of over-reaching.

DO NOT's . . .

- Never use a portable step ladder for purposes for which it was not designed. For example, do not lean a closed portable step ladder against a wall or other surface for the purpose of climbing, or stand on one that has been placed across objects in a horizontal position.
- Do not use a portable step ladder made of metal or any other conductive materials when performing any task or working in an area where you, your tools or materials, or the ladder could make contact with energized electrical conductors or equipment.
- Never climb up or down a portable step ladder while carrying any object that prevents you from firmly grasping the ladder with at least one hand - or that could cause you to lose your balance.
- Do not place any tools or materials on the top cap or any step of your ladder that might fall and strike someone if the ladder were to be bumped or inadvertently moved.
- Never stand on the top cap of a regular portable step ladder, or on the top step. Always follow the ladder manufacturer's rules and warning stickers for proper standing surfaces. While these are not the only precautions and prohibitions applicable to the use of a portable step ladder, heeding these simple tips can go a long ways towards protecting all of us who do use them from accidents, injuries, and even death. applicable to the use of a portable step ladder, heeding these simple tips can go a long ways towards protecting all of us who do use them from accidents, injuries, and even death.

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2024-11-11 Excavation

Avoiding Ground Level Hazards

Most people are mindful that work taking place inside an excavation can be extremely dangerous. Cave-ins, striking an underground utility line, or being exposed to a hazardous atmosphere are just a few of the potential hazards that could injure someone working within an excavation. However, there are many hazards located on or above the surface of the earth at excavation sites that could harm workers as well. So today we will discuss some of the dangers associated with trenching and excavation work that are present on or above the ground, and how we can avoid them.

- Always look above where you will be digging to see if there are any electrical lines hanging overhead. Because our focus is usually directed downward while we dig, it is easy to accidentally raise a backhoe bucket or long section of pipe into an energized electrical line. If any overhead electric lines are present, it may be necessary to have them de-energized or insulated to prevent electrocution, so check with the Competent Person or your Supervisor.
- Identify any encumbrances present on the surface that could present a potential safety hazard once excavation begins. A large boulder located next to an excavation could roll and fall into the excavation if the soil collapses from beneath. And trees, utility poles, and communication equipment poles located adjacent to the edge of an excavation could also fall over and strike someone standing nearby as the soil near them is being excavated. So always check with the excavation site's competent person to see if it is necessary to first relocate any surface encumbrances or secure them in place with bracing before digging begins.
- Always make sure you and your co-workers are easily seen by equipment operators and vehicle drivers in the area. Always wear your high visibility vest or similar garments. And follow company / organizational policy regarding use of traffic control devices and flaggers where required to avoid being struck by a vehicle when working near roadways.
- Keep your distance from excavation equipment equipped with buckets, such as front-end loaders, backhoes and excavators, as the bucket can strike you as it is raised, lowered, or makes a sudden swing. Never assume the equipment operator sees you standing nearby. And also avoid standing or walking directly behind any vehicle or piece of earth-moving equipment because the operator's vision may be blocked when backing up.
- Avoid standing next to any trailers, dump beds, or roll-off containers as they are being loaded or unloaded to avoid being struck by hazards such as soil spillage or other falling materials, rolling pipes, or wheeled excavation equipment. Never stand or walk on any sidewalk, slab, or foundation where the soil beneath has been excavated unless your supervisor or competent person has given you the okay to do so. In some cases, underpinning or shores may have to be installed to support these structures, so they do not

collapse when someone stands on top of them.

While these are not the only above-ground hazards to avoid on trenching and excavation sites, they do represent some common causes of worker injuries and deaths. So keep these tips in mind.

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