

Tripod Orchard Ladder Safety

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Introduction

Narrator

Every year hundreds of workers are injured in ladder accidents like the one you just saw.

Thousands of dollars are lost due to missed work time. And sometimes permanent injuries occur placing a large burden on the family.

Fortunately most ladder accidents can be avoided by taking some simple precautions. In the next couple of minutes we want to demonstrate the correct and safe way to use a tripod orchard ladder.

Safety Check

Tripod orchard ladders consist of two base legs called side rails and a third leg to form a tripod. The tripod design is stable in a variety of orchard conditions.

Before using your ladder it should be examined each day for defects which may cause it to fail and result in serious injury.

The easiest way to complete a ladder safety check is lay it across a fruit bin.

One way to examine a ladder is to start at the bottom of a side rail and work your way to the top of the ladder.

Check the ladder for cracked metal...broken or missing rivets...and bent or twisted braces.

Be sure to check both the top and bottom portion of the rivets.

Inspect the top cap of the ladder for tight connections with the side rails and the hinge connection of the tripod leg.

Check the second side rail continuing from the top to the bottom.

Examine the third leg for dents or bends that would cause it to be weakened.

When you've finished turn the ladder over and again check each side rail for defects.

Also give each step a good twist to make sure it's securely attached.

A ladder that's found to be defective should be repaired before being used. Notify your supervisor of a defective ladder.

Safe Ladder Setup

Worker

We've got some cracks on this ladder. So can you please replace it?

Supervisor

Yeah, let's flag it and put it away and grab a new ladder....

Narrator

He will tell you where to leave it so it can be taken and repaired.

After insuring that you have a sturdy and sound ladder, you may start to use it.

Moving a ladder is done safely by placing your arm and shoulder through the ladder and balancing it on your shoulder. Hold on to the third leg so it can't swing out and cause loss of balance.

Never place or use a ladder near electric lines. Contact with the electrical lines can result in electrocution.

In preparing to climb the ladder place the side rails firmly in the soil. Making sure there are no rocks or debris to cause the ladder to be unstable.

The third leg then can be placed out in front to give a 70 to 75 degree angle. This can be easily checked by placing your toes at the base of the ladder; reaching your hands straight out in front of you; and your fingertips should just touch the ladder.

Don't lean the ladder into the tree using the tree for support.

This procedure can be adapted to your style of climbing and require little additional effort.

Always ascend and descend facing the ladder. This allows you to use your hands for support.

As you work on the ladder it's important to keep your center of gravity between the side rails. A good rule is to keep your belt buckle centered between the two side rails.

The picking bag should also remain between the rails.

If you're not able to complete the operation move the ladder.

Don't step out on a branch to try to extend your reach. The branch may break causing you to fall. This is the cause of most serious orchard worker accidents.

When moving a ladder pick it up. Never walk it. Careful handling of the third leg will prevent it from swinging into the ladder.

When trying to reach fruit at the top of the tree, stay off the top two steps. Get a taller ladder if necessary or let the fruit go unpicked. Inform your supervisor of the problem.

When positioned correctly ladders can be used safely on sloping ground.

Always position the third leg of the ladder up slope from the side rails.

Sometimes a cross slope position is needed. The third leg should be slightly down slope from center for increased stability.

Safety and comfort when using a ladder can be increased by wearing properly fitting clothing. Avoid extremely loose fitting clothing. Pants should be short enough to prevent them from becoming caught on the heel of your shoe. Shoes with a stiff sole will prevent your feet from tiring while standing on the ladder. Heels will help prevent your foot from slipping through the step.

When working in wet weather, insure that rain gear fits properly. Extra caution is needed when steps or shoes are wet or muddy.

At the end of the day lay your ladder down either under the tree you're working on or a spot designated by your supervisor. Never lay a ladder down in tall grass. It may be hidden from view and possibly run over by machinery working in the orchard. Don't leave a ladder free stand. Winds may blow the ladder over possibly injuring someone or damaging the ladder.

Review

Narrator

Let's review the major points presented.

First inspect your ladder daily.

Second wear appropriate clothing...shoes with stiff soles...and pants that fit properly.

Third set your ladder carefully.

And fourth keep your body centered on the ladder.

Fifth never step out on a branch to extend your reach.

Your safety depends upon your following these instructions.