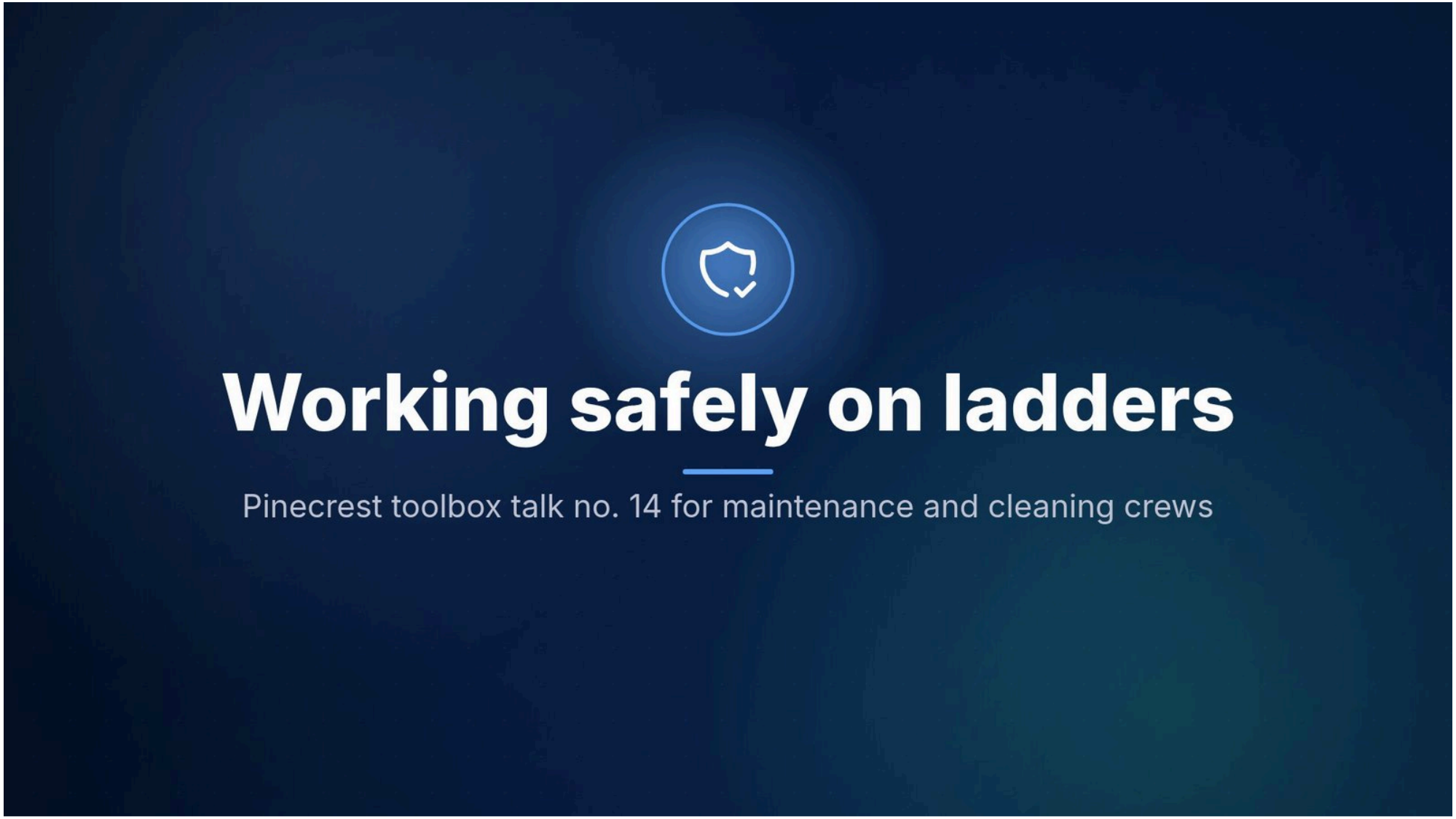


1 / 12 · Working safely on ladders

This toolbox talk is about working safely on ladders. By the end, you'll know when a ladder is the right tool, how to check and set it up, how to stay safe while climbing, and what to do if something goes wrong.



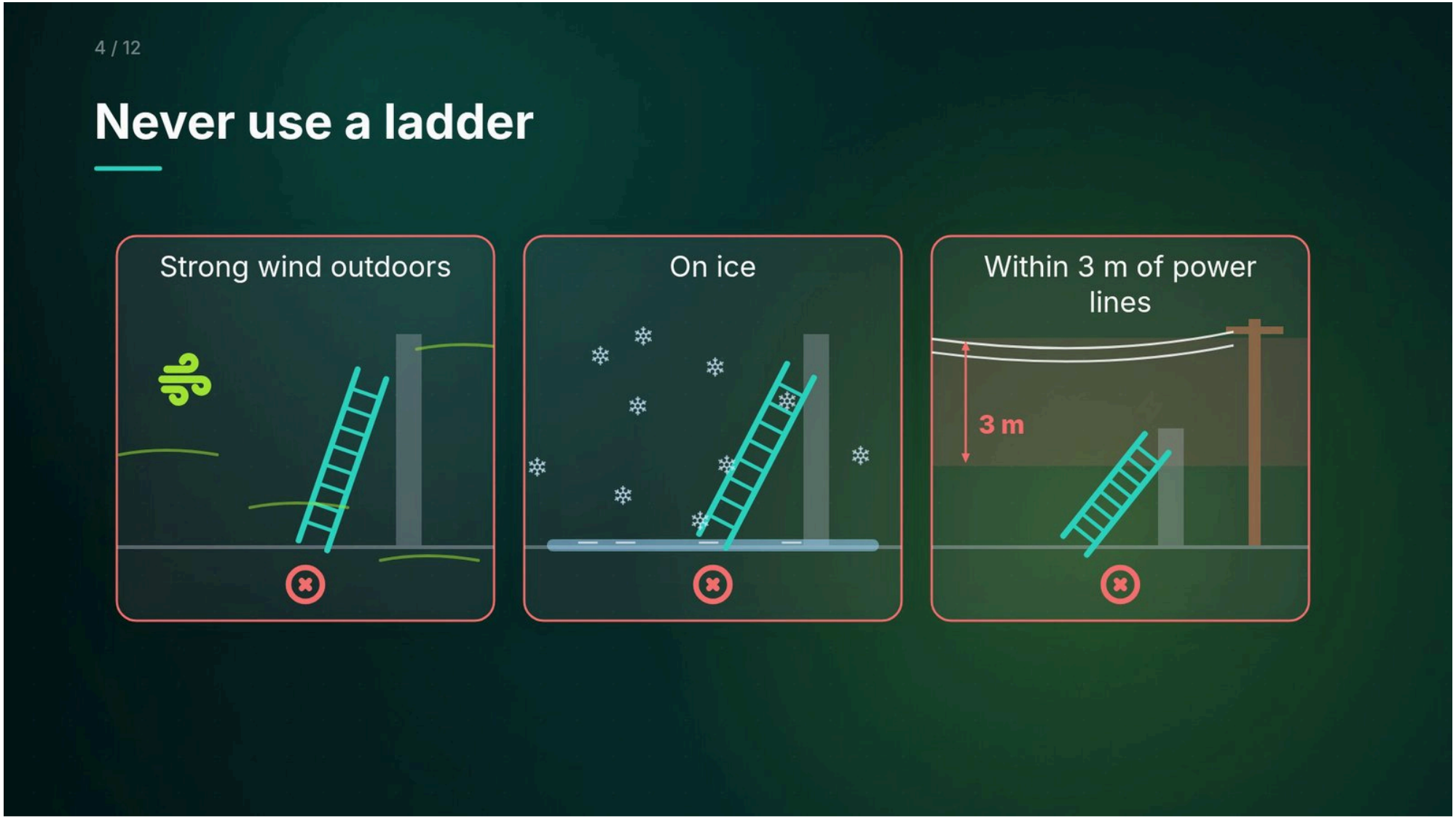
2 / 12 · Why this matters

Falls from ladders are the most common serious injury in our kind of work. Most happen from less than 3 metres, on quick jobs like changing a light. Last year our crews reported 9 ladder near-misses and 2 injuries, and every one could have been prevented.

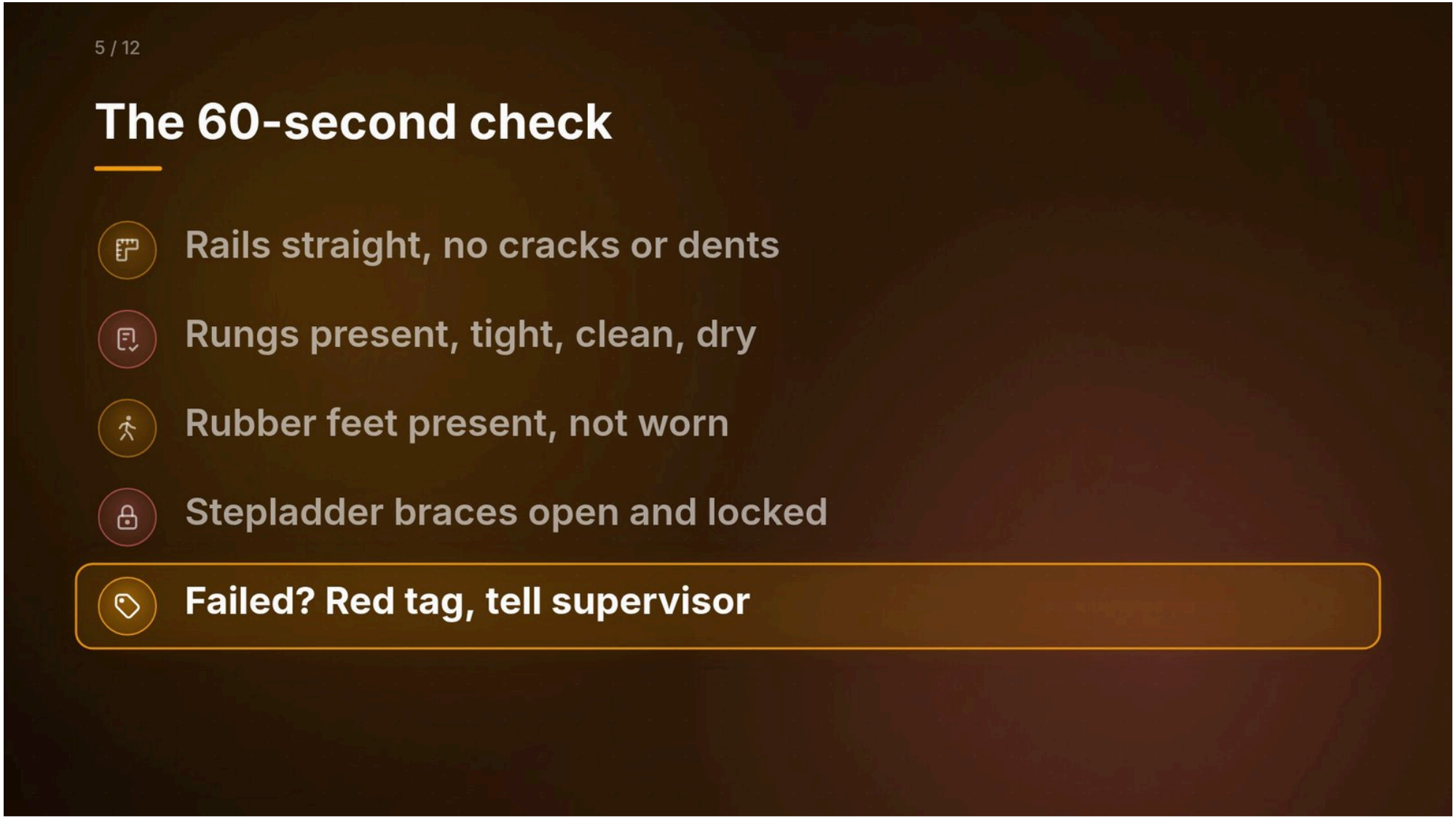


3 / 12 · Is a ladder the right tool?

Before you climb, ask whether a ladder is the right tool. A ladder is only for short, light work: up to 30 minutes in one place, with one hand free to hold on. For longer or heavier jobs, use a platform or a tower. Ask your supervisor, because we have both in the yard.



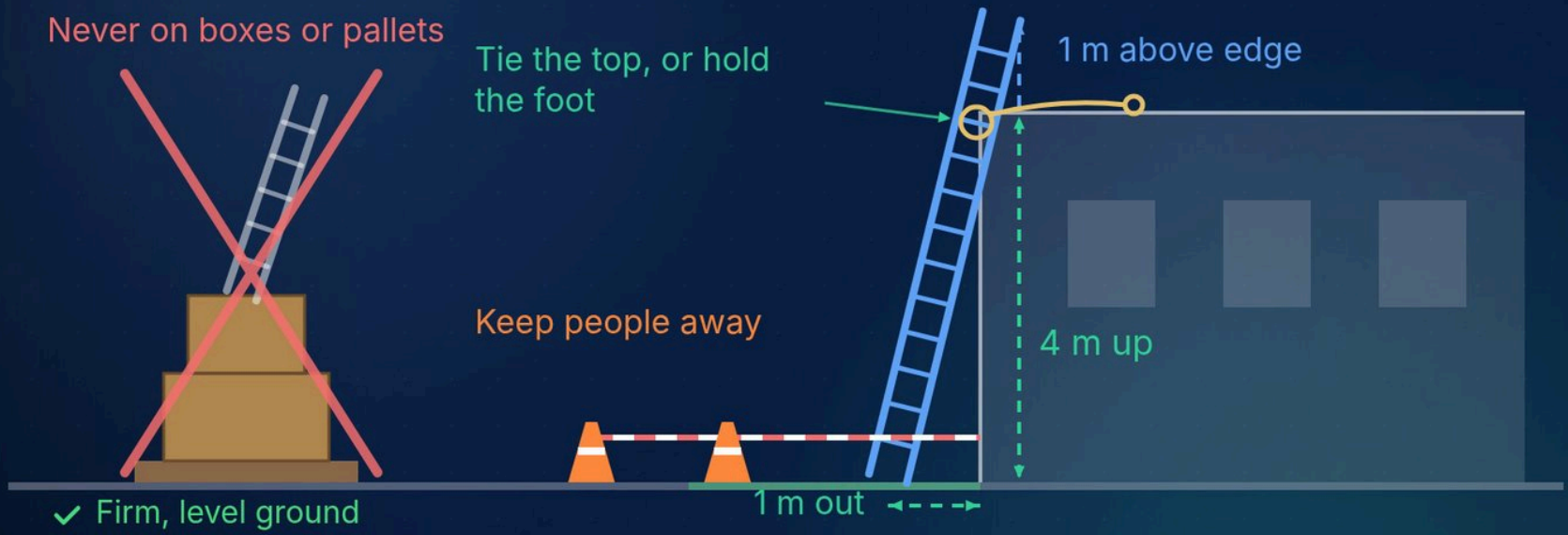
Some conditions rule a ladder out completely. Never use one outdoors in strong wind. Never use one on ice. And never use a ladder within 3 metres of overhead power lines.



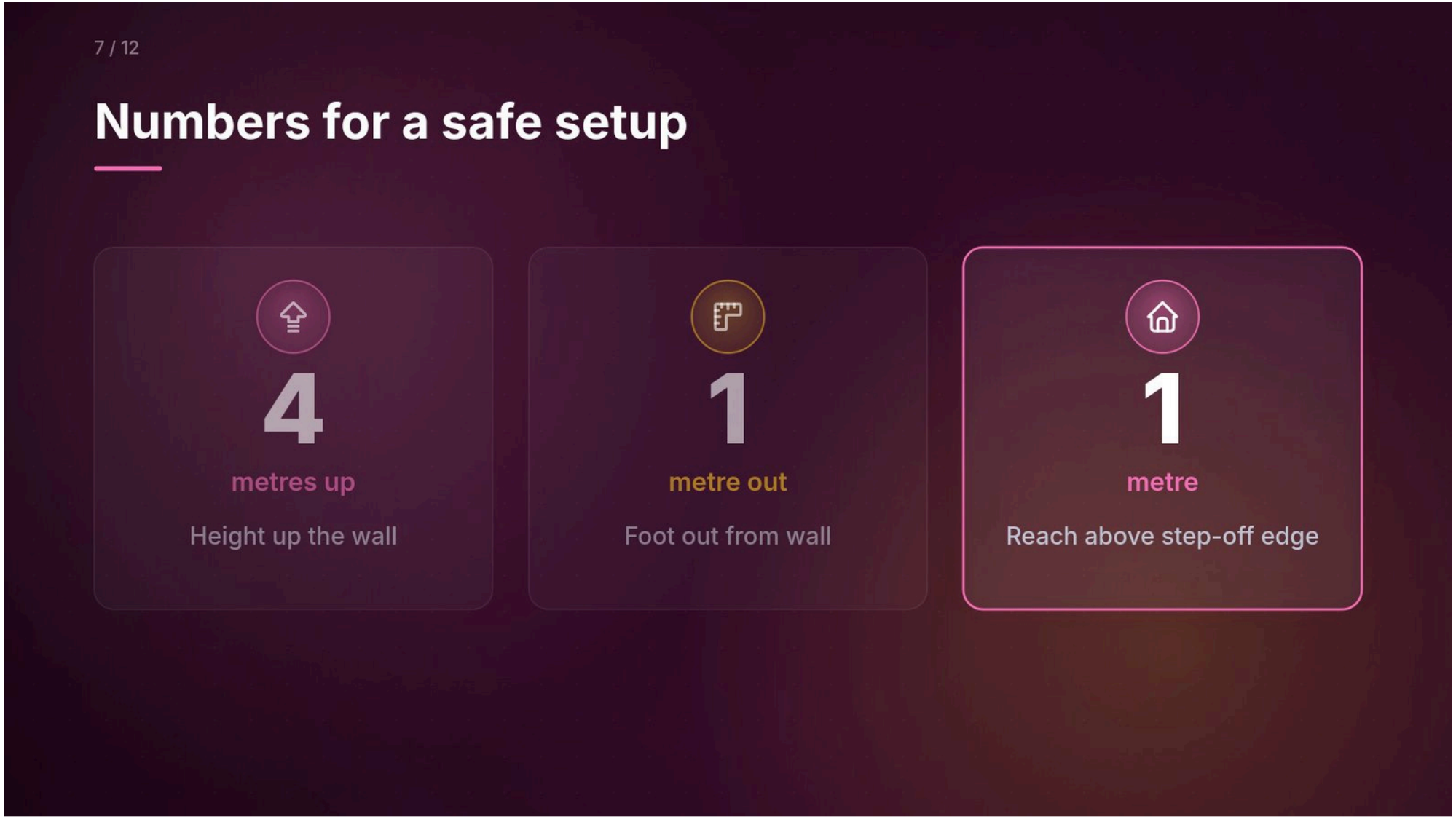
5 / 12 · The 60-second check

Every time, give the ladder a 60-second check. The rails must be straight, with no cracks or dents. The rungs must all be there, tight, clean and dry. Both rubber feet must be present and not worn smooth, and a stepladder's locks and braces must be fully open and locked. If anything fails, tag it 'Do not use' and tell your supervisor.

Setting up, step by step

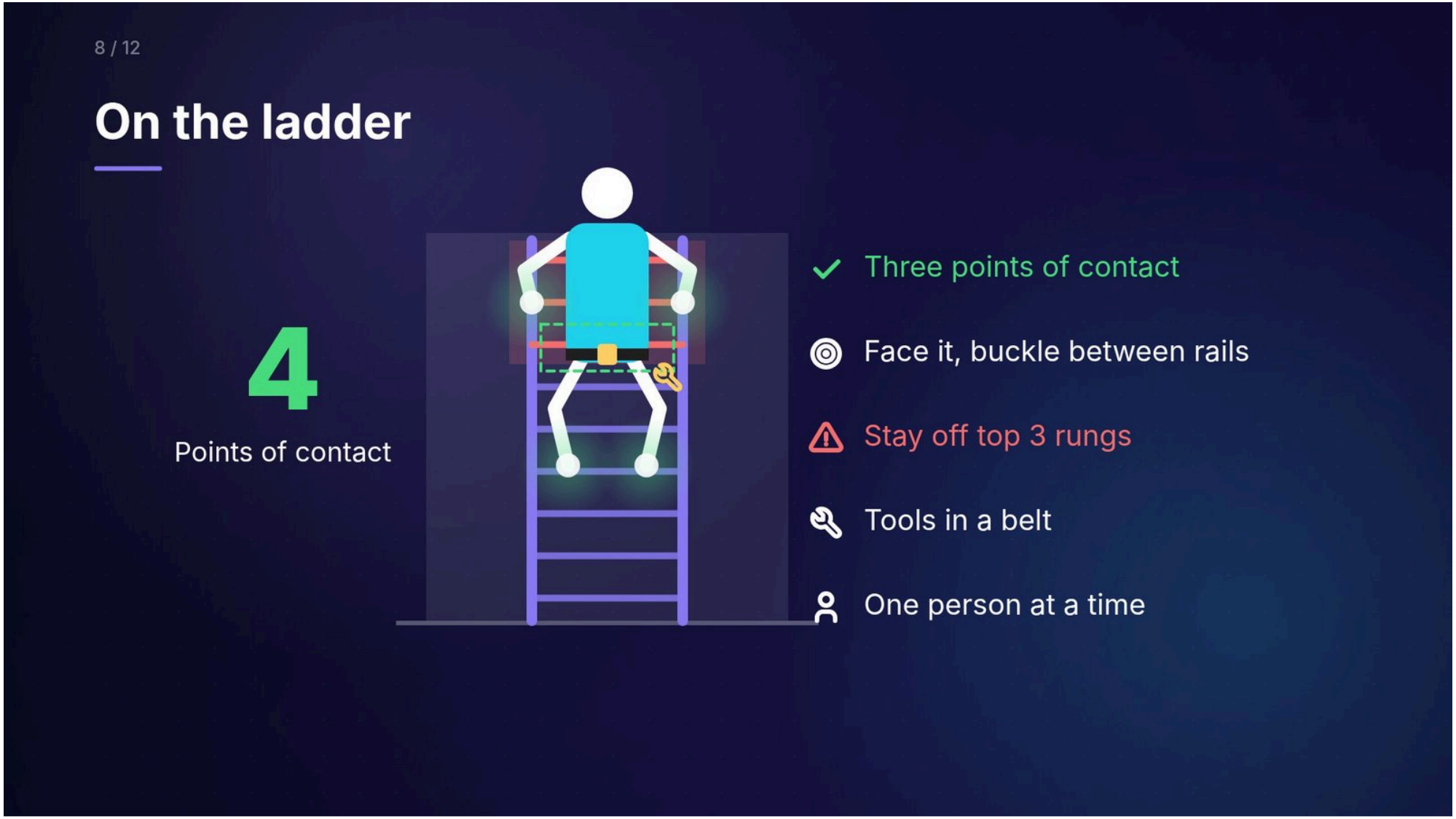


Set up in five steps. Start on firm, level ground, never on boxes, pallets or a wet floor. Angle a leaning ladder correctly, and make sure it reaches past any edge you step onto. Then tie the top or have someone hold the foot. Finally, keep people away with cones or a barrier, and guard any nearby door.



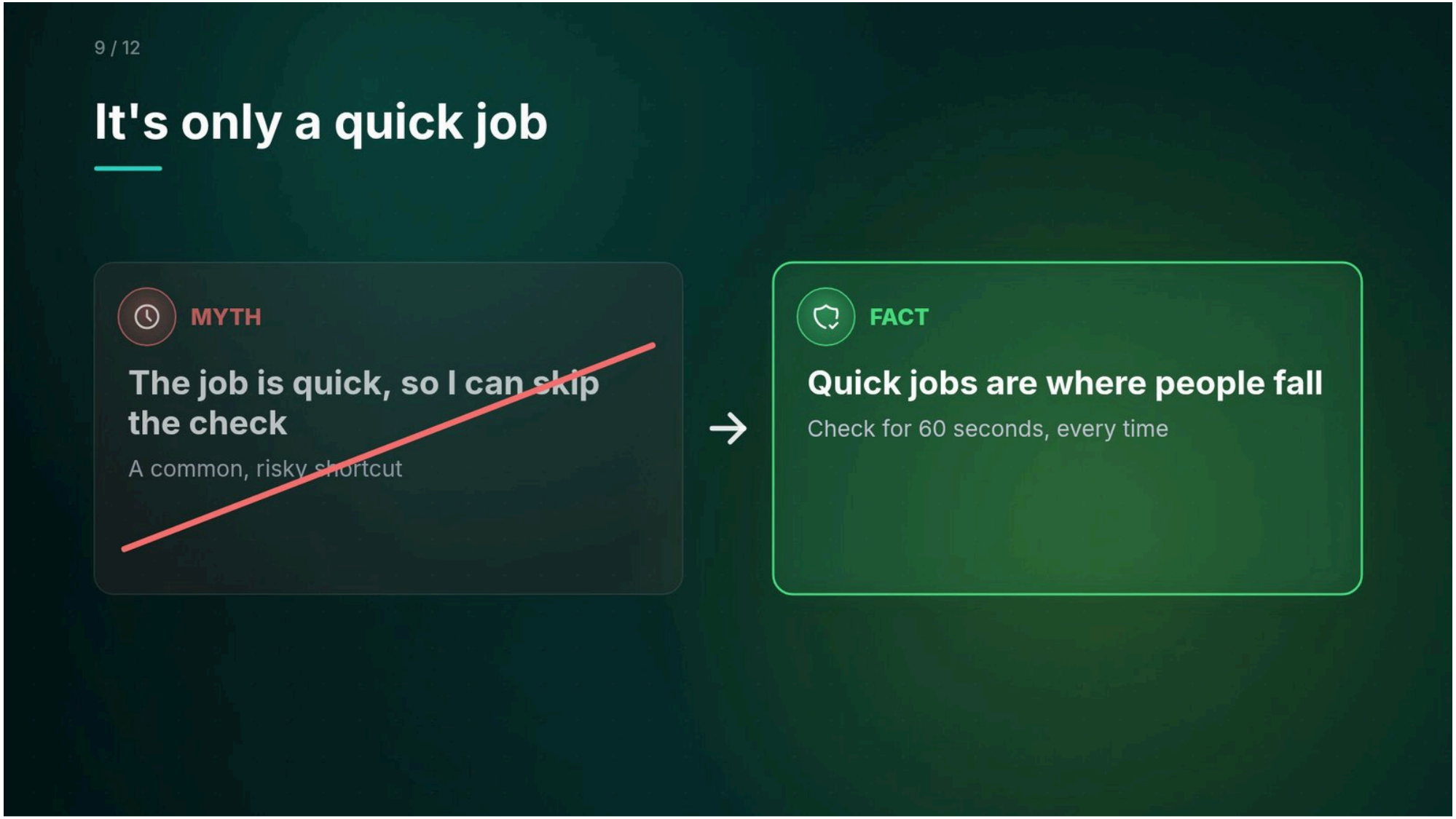
7 / 12 · The key measurements

Two measurements matter most. With the 1-in-4 rule, for every 4 metres up, the foot of the ladder sits 1 metre out from the wall. And if you're stepping off onto a roof or platform, the ladder must reach at least 1 metre above it.



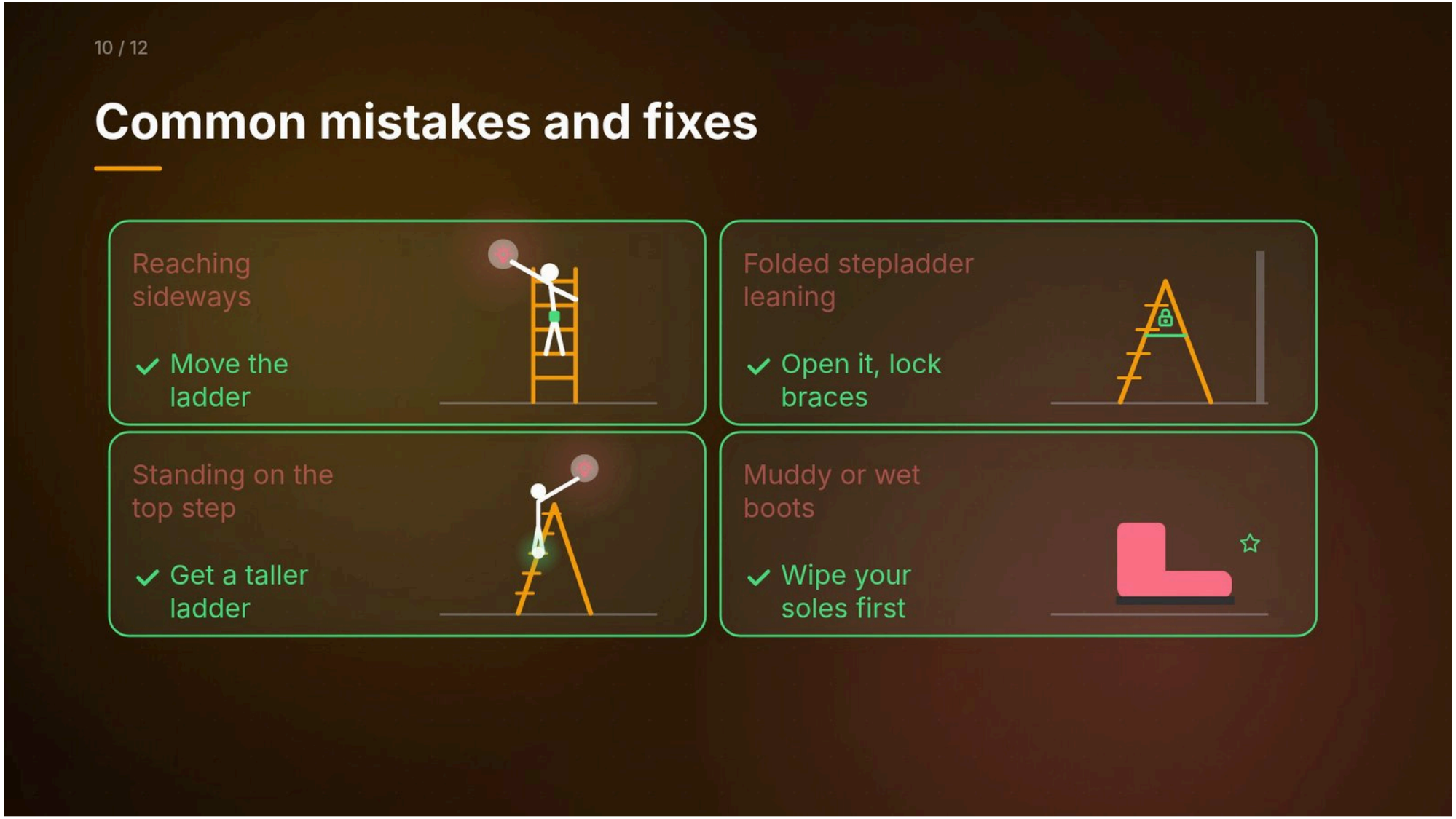
8 / 12 · While you are on it

Once you're on the ladder, keep three points of contact: two feet and one hand, or two hands and one foot. Face the ladder going up and down, and keep your belt buckle between the rails. Stay off the top three rungs of a leaning ladder, or the top two steps of a stepladder. Carry tools in a belt, and only one person climbs at a time.



9 / 12 · Quick jobs still need the check

A common belief is that a quick job doesn't need the check. In fact, quick jobs are exactly where people fall. Do the 60-second check every single time.



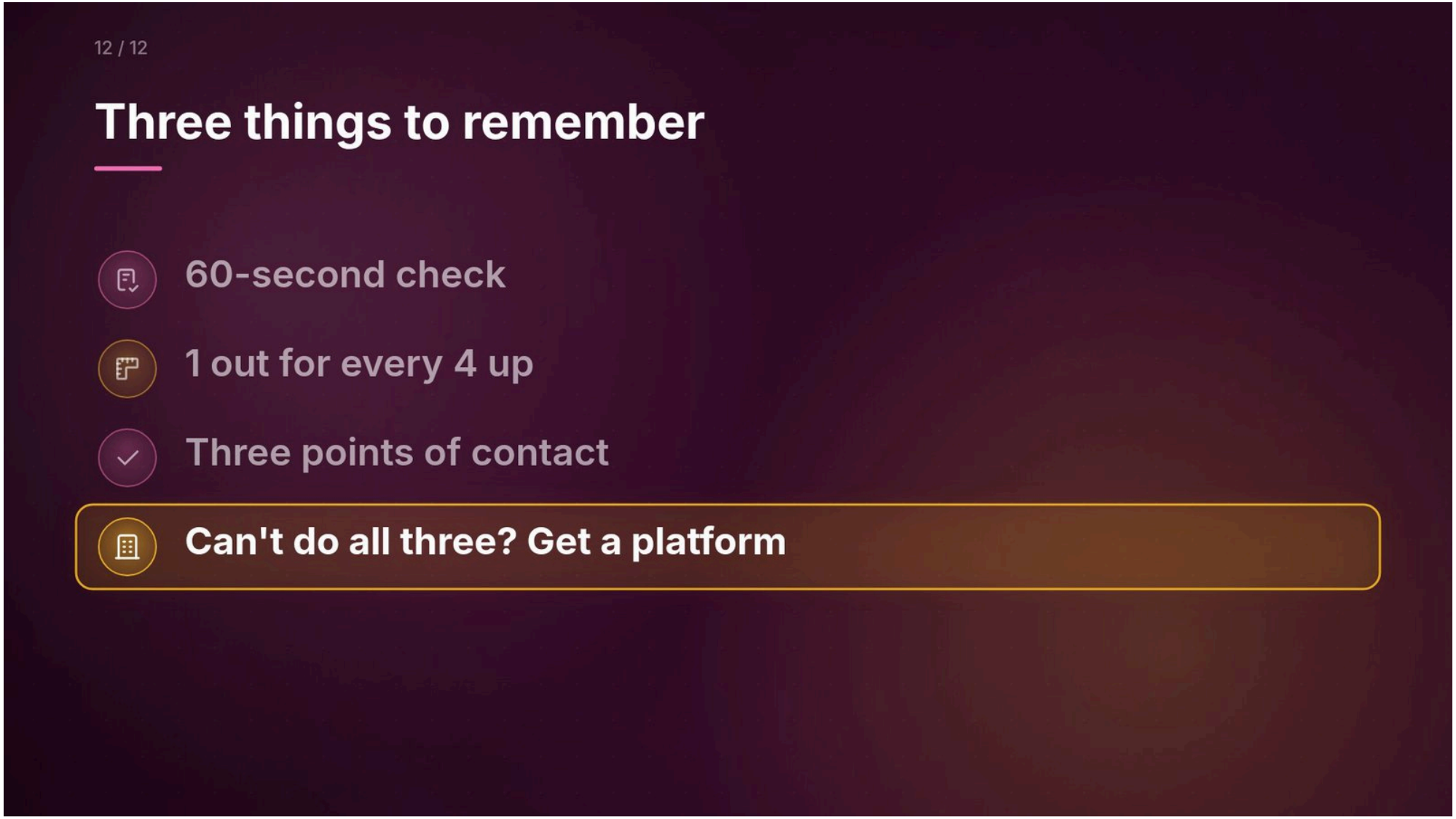
10 / 12 · Mistakes we see most

Here are the other mistakes we see most. Reaching sideways just this once? Climb down and move the ladder; it takes one minute. A folded stepladder leaning on a wall? Open and lock it, or fetch a leaning ladder. Standing on the top step for height? Get a taller ladder or a platform. And wipe muddy or wet boots before you climb.



11 / 12 · If something goes wrong

If someone falls, don't move them unless they're in danger where they are. Call the emergency number, then the site supervisor. Report every fall and near-miss the same day, on the green form or in the Pinecrest app; nobody is blamed for reporting. Then tag and remove the ladder until it's been checked.



12 / 12 · Remember three things

Remember three things. Check the ladder for 60 seconds. Set it 1 out for every 4 up. And keep three points of contact. If the job doesn't allow all three, stop and ask for a platform.