Toolbox talk: working safely on ladders

Pinecrest Building Services · Safety talk no. 14 · For all maintenance and cleaning crews · 15 November 2026 · Sample safety talk written for the DocReel demo

Why we are talking about this

Falls from ladders are the most common serious injury in our kind of work. Most happen from less than 3 metres, on jobs that take under 15 minutes: changing a light, clearing a gutter, reaching a high shelf. Last year our crews reported 9 ladder near-misses and 2 injuries. Every one of them could have been prevented by the checks below.

Before you climb: is a ladder the right tool?

- **Use a ladder 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; we have both in the yard.
- **Never use a ladder outdoors in strong wind** or on ice, and never within 3 metres of overhead power lines.

The 60-second check

Look at	It must be	If it isn't
Rails (the two sides)	Straight, no cracks or dents	Do not use it. Put a red “Do not use” tag on it and tell your supervisor.
Rungs	All there, tight, clean and dry	
Feet	Both rubber feet present and not worn smooth	
Locks and braces	Fully open and locked on a stepladder	

Setting up

1. **Firm, level ground.** Never on boxes, pallets or a wet floor.
2. **The 1-in-4 rule for leaning ladders:** for every 4 metres up, the foot is 1 metre out from the wall.
3. **Go 1 metre past the edge.** If you are stepping off onto a roof or platform, the ladder must reach at least 1 metre above it.
4. **Tie it or have it held.** Secure the top, or have a second person hold the foot.
5. **Keep people away.** Put out cones or a barrier, and lock or guard any door the ladder is in front of.

While you are on it

- **Three points of contact, always:** two feet and one hand, or two hands and one foot.
- **Face the ladder** going up and coming down.
- **Keep your belt buckle between the rails.** If you have to lean, climb down and move the ladder.
- **Stay off the top:** not on the top 3 rungs of a leaning ladder, and not on the top 2 steps of a stepladder.
- **Carry tools in a belt or pull them up on a rope.** Nothing in your hands while you climb.
- **One person on a ladder** at a time.

The mistakes we see most

What people do	What to do instead
Reach sideways “just this once”	Climb down and move the ladder. It takes one minute.
Use a stepladder folded and leaning on a wall	Open it fully and lock the braces, or fetch a leaning ladder.
Stand on the top step to gain height	Get a taller ladder or a platform.
Climb in muddy or wet boots	Wipe your soles first.
Skip the check because the job is quick	Do the 60-second check every time. Quick jobs are where people fall.

If something goes wrong

1. **If someone falls, do not move them** unless they are in danger where they are. Call the emergency number, then the site supervisor.
2. **Report every fall and every near-miss the same day,** on the green form or in the Pinecrest app. Nobody is blamed for reporting.
3. **Tag and remove the ladder** until it has been checked.

> **Remember three things:** check it 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.

Questions for the crew

- Where on this site would a platform be safer than a ladder?
- Has anyone seen a damaged ladder this month? Where is it now?
- Who holds the foot of the ladder when you work alone?

Pinecrest Building Services is a made-up company. This sample safety talk was written for docreel.app to show how safety training becomes a video. It is general guidance, not a substitute for your own site rules or local regulations.