



# SAFE@HOME

## SAFETY MOMENT

Protecting You and Yours In and From Your Home™

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### GETTING HIGH AT HOME

By Randy DeVaul

Time to paint your house, or change that fluorescent light bulb? Need to check the batteries in your smoke alarms? Time to dust the ceiling side of that ceiling fan? Getting a box down from the top of the stack on the top shelf? If so, it's time to get: a) a chair/stool b) sawhorses and wood for a scaffold c) a ladder d) your teenager.

Which did you choose ('c' is correct)? There are many ingenious ways to access elevated places within the home. I have responded to medical emergencies from people who used these ingenious methods, including using 'real' ladders, simply because they took a "shortcut" that didn't work.

The leading cause of deaths in and around the home involves falls. According to the National Safety Council, over 6,000 people die from falls in and around the home every year. Many more suffer disabling injuries. Many of these falls – 130,000 each year – involve falling from "ladders." When using the wrong tool or using the right tool the wrong way, you set up events that can alter your life or your quality of life. So choosing wisely benefits you in getting the job done and ensuring you live to see another job that needs to be done.

When the job involves reaching something taller than you, choosing the right size and type of ladder is important. For example, a four-foot portable/step ladder will help you change light bulbs, check smoke alarms, dust, reach top shelves in the kitchen, and perform low-level indoor and outdoor maintenance work.

If you own a two-story home that requires painting, gutter-cleaning, or other elevated tasks, think about an extension ladder (this is one ladder with two sections, not two ladders

packaged together). Remember, the higher you have to go, the more stable you want that ladder to be. I would not skimp on this purchase – it should only be one time and your life will depend on it!

Of course, if money is scarce or, at least tight, you can participate in the 'neighborhood share' program. You know, let your neighbor buy it and then he can share it with you when you need it. Well, actually, share in buying it. Then you can share using it. Or, you can rent a ladder for however long your project may be. That keeps you from having to store one year round while also not having to pay full price for one.

Whichever option you select, remember that gravity and physics will not keep you on a ladder that is leaning like the Tower of Pisa. Electrical lines do not provide hanging support. Standing on the very top rung or step may get you another six-inch reach but it will also get you more speed when you drop to the ground.

Ladder hazards around the home are real and life-threatening. Make good choices now to save pain and hardship later. It's your life – protect it!