

# Be safe when you clean out those gutters

Every full, homeowners lug out their ladders to remove a season's worth of leaves, pine needles and debris from their rain gutters.

According to a report prepared by Rincon Industries, one person dies as the result of a ladder fall; ten thousand more check into emergency rooms with disabling injuries.

Studies show that most of these accidents occur because proper safety precautions were not followed. "Ladders are so commonplace," says Paul Zondlak of Rincon Industries, "that most people don't even realize the hazards involved, let alone receive any training in safety precautions."

How serious is the potential for falls? Serious enough that the Department of Consumer and

Industry Services has expanded their all protection rules. According to a 64-page booklet produced by the Construction Safety Standards Commission, all employers must provide a guardrail system, safety net, or harness for any employee working 6 feet above a lower level.

In addition, employers are required to provide training for every employee who might be exposed to fall hazards. This includes training in recognizing hazards, and training in the procedures required to minimize these hazards.

Hazard reduction involves training in the nature of hazards; correct procedures for erecting, maintaining, disassembling, and inspecting fall protection systems; use and operation of guardrail systems; personal

fall arrest systems, safety net systems, warning line systems, safety monitoring systems, controlled access zones, and other protection to be used; and the limitations on the use of mechanical equipment.

What does this mean to the average homeowner? Zondlak suggests that if professionals require such extensive training and precautions, it only makes sense that the average homeowner treat the issue of safety seriously. He recommends that you play it safe and hire a professional to clean out those gutters.

It's a dirty, time-consuming job, anyway. But if you need to do it, learn and use ladder safety guidelines.

For homeowners who clean their own gutters, Zondlak offers

the following advice.

■ Wear leather gloves to help protect yourself from injury or disease caused by rotting debris, insects and rodents.

■ Wear protective clothing and rubber-soled shoes.

■ Barricade traffic areas in your work site; lock, barricade or guard doorways in which a ladder is placed.

■ Use the right ladder. It should be strong, heavy-duty, and tall enough to allow you to work at wrist height. There should be some type of slip-resistant.

■ Inspect the ladder prior to EVERY use. The ladder should be structurally sound and free of oil, grease, or other hazards.

■ When transporting the ladder, tie it down securely and carry it parallel to the ground.

■ Use the ladder only for the purpose for which it was designed (refer to the manufacturer's labeling and recommendations).

■ Use only non-conductive side rails around live electrical equipment.

■ Do not load ladder beyond maximum intended load.

■ Keep the area around the top and bottom of the ladder clear.

■ Do not move, shift, or extend the ladder while occupied. Never "walk" a ladder!

■ Do not use the top of the ladder or its top step for standing or stepping.

■ Do not stand on cross bracing.

■ Always face the ladder when climbing or descending.

■ Always maintain 3 points of

contact with the ladder (2 feet/1 hand or 2 hands/1 foot).

■ Carry tools in a pouch around your waist; use a rope to raise or lower large items such as tool boxes or materials.

■ Do not overextend sideways. Remember the belt buckle rule: Keep your belt buckle positioned between the side rails at all times. This maintains your center of gravity.

■ Never allow more than one person on the ladder at a time.

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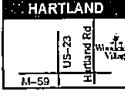
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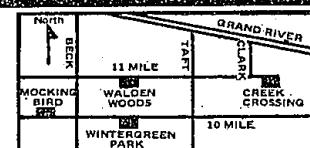


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