

Safety Note #98

ORCHARD-LADDER SAFETY



Photograph Courtesy of
Lindcove REC

Information available from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission indicates approximately 5,000 people nationwide received hospital treatment for ladder-related injuries during 2004. These injuries ranged from sprains and strains to contusions, lacerations, and fractures. Most orchard-ladder injuries are caused by falling from ladders, toppling ladders, slipping on ladder steps, catching feet on ladder steps, and being poked by branches or hit by rebounding branches.

California Code of Regulations Title 8, Section 3302 (7) requires employees be trained on the tools and equipment they use in the workplace. **Video E-045 Citrus Harvesting is available from the ANR Environmental Health and Safety Library at <http://safety.ucanr.org>.**

Orchard-Ladder Precautions

- Prior to use, always inspect orchard ladders for defects, including missing, loose, or sheared rivets, broken steps, and bent rails or tripod legs.
- When working on orchard ladders always wear appropriate personal protective equipment, including a hat, eye protection, long sleeve shirt, long pants, and gloves.
- Never use an aluminum orchard ladder near energized electrical equipment such as power lines.
- Only one person at a time shall climb or stand on an orchard ladder.
- Never sit on an orchard ladder and do not stand on the top two steps of an orchard ladder.
- When positioning a straight orchard ladder, the top of the ladder should be placed firmly against the tree trunk at an angle so that the ladder steps are parallel to the ground.
- Straight orchard ladders are not stable across the ground slope. Therefore, always position straight orchard ladders so they are facing into an uphill or downhill slope.
- When positioning a tripod orchard ladder, the steps should be level and the tripod leg should extend straight from the center line of the ladder. Where possible, the tripod leg should be placed on level ground. On sloping land, always position the tripod leg uphill. When positioning the ladder across the land slope, locate the tripod leg slightly downhill.
- Avoid reaching too high above your head or too far to the side while standing on an orchard ladder. Climb to a higher step or move the ladder closer to the tree fruit if you are beginning to reach above your head or lean out past the ladder rails.
- Position the straps of the fruit sack or bucket to evenly distribute the picked crop weight and maintain a stable posture on the orchard ladder.
- Carefully remove fruit from the tree to prevent being poked by branches or hit by rebounding branches.
- Consume adequate water and take appropriate rest breaks to prevent heat stress during hot days (for additional information see Safety Note #20 Heat Stress Awareness).

See Safety Note #3 for general information about ladder safety.