

Three-Point Contact

About 10 minutes to deliver

Climbing and getting down off ladders and equipment without getting hurt — and why the last three feet are the dangerous part.

Three points of contact means three of your four limbs are on the ladder or the machine at all times — two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand. It is not a slogan. It is what keeps you attached when the fourth limb slips.

GOING UP

- Face the ladder. Chest toward the rungs, up and down. Turning around to come down facing out feels faster and puts your weight on the wrong side of the rails.
- Grip the rungs, not the rails. A hand wrapped around a rung stops a fall. A hand sliding down a rail does not.
- Nothing in your hands. If you are carrying it, you are not gripping with it. Tools go in a belt or a bag; materials go up on a line or get handed up. A five-gallon bucket in one hand is the most common way people start a climb wrong.
- Clean your boots and the rungs first. Mud, ice, grease, wet concrete. The rung does not care how careful you are.
- Set up before you climb. Firm level ground, spreaders locked, extension ladder tied off and extending about three feet past the landing.

GETTING DOWN IS THE DANGEROUS PART

Most climbing injuries happen in the last two or three feet.

- Never jump down. Not off a truck bed, a trailer, a loader cab, or the last two rungs. A three-foot jump puts your body weight plus your tools onto your ankles and knees, on ground that is rarely flat. People blow out an ankle stepping off a tailgate and lose six weeks.
- Get off equipment the way you got on. Face the machine, three points, using the steps and grab handles the manufacturer fitted. Not a tire. Never a control lever — that is how a machine gets started with someone hanging off the side of it.
- Kick the steps clear. Cab steps collect mud and ice worse than anything else on site, and they are the first thing your boot hits.
- Report broken steps and loose handles the same day. A bent step is a defect, not a quirk.
- Look before your foot lands. By the last step you are already thinking about the next task. That is exactly when the ankle rolls.

ASK THE CREW

- Which ladders or machines on this site have steps or handles that need reporting?
- Where are people carrying things up by hand because there is no better way to get them up?
- Has anyone here rolled an ankle stepping down off something? What happened?

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ATTENDANCE RECORD

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Date

Job / site

Delivered by

Company

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I delivered this talk and determined it was suitable for this crew and this work.

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