



A Five-minute Training Series for Pest Management Professionals

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Attic Access Ladder Hazards

There are safety practices that apply to any ladder you climb and safety practices involved with working in an attic. This safety tip will review the safe use of a dropdown attic access ladder. These ladders come in various designs and are installed in the attic scuttle hole to provide a fold down or telescoping ladder as part of the attic access door. An attic access ladder can be inadequate, in disrepair, or attached incorrectly causing an unstable climbing option and jeopardizing your safety.

In pest control, wild life removal work, insulation work or other home services, attic access is often necessary. Whatever the task that takes you into an attic, you must make sure you can both safely enter and exit the space. You need to **take the time required to inspect** the attic ladder and you must make alternate plans if the condition is unsafe.

Just a few of the injuries resulting from attic access ladder use:

- Employee was climbing out of the customer's attic, ladder broke when he stepped onto it causing him to fall 8' to the floor.
- Employee was pulling down an attic entry ladder and it struck his right hand.
- Fell off attic ladder when it shifted under my weight.
- Employee injured knee while using customers pull down ladder because he could not use bottom broken rung. He jumped down from second to last rung and the ladder and frame gave out resulting in fall.
- Employee's foot slipped off the debris covered attic ladder.



When you first open the attic access, be alert for falling objects. Once you have pulled the ladder down and before you climb, look for the following:

1. Fastened with an insufficient number or improper nails or screws. Be wary of "place nail here" notices that are nowhere near any nails. Does it feel secure?
2. Loose mounting bolts. This condition is often caused by age rather than installation.
3. Ladders cut too short or too long. Stairs should reach the floor with straight side rails. If too long, there will be pressure on the folding hinge, which can cause breakage.
4. Bent, broken, or other damage to folding hinge.
5. Missing, cracked, warped, or debris covered steps.

So the attic ladder is unsafe . . . Now what?

- Investigate if there is a second opening to the attic with a safe access ladder.
- Discuss your inability to safely access the attic with the customer and the need for repairs to be made before you can service that area.
- Continue with your service but notate the attic as an inaccessible area and explain that to the customer.
- Use your own straight or multi-function ladder over the dropdown ladder by supporting it on the attic opening and at the proper incline ratio. Only use this option if you can set your ladder safely. Do **NOT** use your A-frame ladder in a closed position for this access.

Above all, **never compromise your personal safety** using an unsafe attic dropdown ladder.

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