



U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS/SAFETY CENTER

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## Resource document **HOME**

### ***Household Threats: Ladders, Stairs and Weapons***

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#### **Narrative:**

At home, threats pose danger to unsuspecting victims every day. The perpetrators may seem harmless enough but each year, thousands of Americans are injured and some killed while using ladders, stairs and privately owned weapons.

According to the NSC, falls are one of the leading causes of unintentional injuries and result in approximately 8.9 million emergency room visits annually. No one is immune; slips, trips and falls can happen anywhere, but common areas are showers, tubs, stairs and wet floors.

The NSC also reported that falls are the second-leading cause of unintentional death in homes.

Another home hazard not to be taken lightly is privately owned weapons. Most Soldiers handle their assigned weapons routinely enough, and when they're done using it, they turn it back into the armor.

Safety is a factor in all that Soldiers do and implementing some control measures at home is something Soldiers are all capable of accomplishing.

#### **Key Messages:**

- Home is where most Soldiers feel comfortable and that they shouldn't let preventable, household accidents compromise that feeling.
- Identify slip, trip and fall hazards and fix them!
- Proper clearing procedures of privately owned weapons are vital – too many Soldiers are dying in preventable, negligent discharge accidents.

### **Talking points:**

- Soldiers need to apply the same weapons handling care and discipline they practice on duty, when they're at home with their POWs.
- The potential for slip, trip and fall accidents around the house are avoidable if individuals take the time to identify and fix hazards.
- Removing tripping hazards such as cords and other objects, using the correct ladder for the job and always keeping three points of contact on a ladder are examples of how individuals can protect themselves.
- At the end of the day when Soldiers go home, they need to implement the risk management strategies they use at work to identify and mitigate hazards in their homes.

### **Tips:**

By taking some time and looking around the house, individuals can greatly reduce their chances of having a household accident associated with ladders, stairs and privately owned weapons.

The National Safety Council recommends the following for preventing slips, trips and falls associated with ladders.

Proper ladder setup will help prevent slips and falls whether at work or home. Ladder safety may seem simple, but too many injuries continue to occur every year. Keep yourself in control of your safety and follow these tips:

- Choose the right ladder for the job and make sure you have received training on how to use it properly
- Check the work area for hazards, such as cords or objects in the walkway
- If the ladder is particularly long and heavy, get a coworker to help you carry it
- Inspect the ladder before and after a job - don't use a damaged or unsafe ladder
- Read all warning labels carefully and follow directions before you climb
- Place the base of the ladder on a firm, solid surface
- Make sure the top of the ladder has firm support, too – never lean a ladder against a window pane or other unstable surface
- A straight or extension ladder should be placed 1 foot away from the surface it rests against for every 4 feet of ladder height – make sure the ladder extends at least 3 feet over the top edge
- Securely fasten straight and extension ladders to the upper support
- Wear clean, dry, slip-resistant shoes and use ladders with slip resistant feet
- Pay attention to the weight limits specific to the ladder you are using
- Don't stand any higher than the third rung from the top of a ladder
- Don't lean or overreach – reposition the ladder closer to the work instead
- Don't use a ladder as a bridge or scaffold
- Don't put a ladder on a box, barrel or other object to gain additional height
- Always keep at least three points of contact with the ladder (i.e., two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand)
- When you climb, always face the ladder and grip the rungs, not the siderails

- Keep your body between the ladder siderails when climbing
- Do not climb with tools in hand – use a tool belt
- Climb down a ladder one rung at a time and don't jump off
- Do not use ladders outdoors in windy or inclement weather, and if the weather turns while you are on it, descend immediately

It's a fact that Soldiers need to be qualified and proficient with their assigned weapons and the same goes for privately owned weapons. They should always practice safe weapons handling procedures with all weapons and here's a simple acronym that can help Soldiers remember the basics of weapon safety: THINK

Treat every weapon as if it is loaded

Handle every weapon with care

Identify the target before you fire

Never point the muzzle at anything you don't intend to shoot

Keep the weapon on safe and your finger off the trigger until you intend to fire.

When it comes to weapons safety, no one can afford to take short cuts. Shoot Straight – Shoot Safe!

#### **Historical Reference:**

<https://safety.army.mil/>

[http://www.nsc.org/safety\\_home/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/Documents/Slips%20Trips%20and%20Falls\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.nsc.org/safety_home/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/Documents/Slips%20Trips%20and%20Falls_FINAL.pdf)

[http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid\\_safe/home/gun\\_safety.html#](http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid_safe/home/gun_safety.html#)

<https://safety.army.mil/rangeweaponssafety/Home/tabid/1435/Default.aspx>

(AKO login required)

#### **Statistics:**

According to the National Safety Council, falls are one of the leading causes of unintentional injuries and result in approximately 8.9 million emergency room visits annually. No one is immune; slips, trips and falls can happen anywhere, but common areas are showers, tubs, stairs and wet floors.

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Between fiscal 2008 and fiscal 2012, 19 Soldiers died in off-duty weapons handling accidents.

Six Soldiers lost their lives in fiscal 2013 to off-duty negligent discharge accidents involving privately owned weapons.