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Climb safely while using ladders for holiday decorating

With the holiday season now under way, Sarasota County Fire Chief Kenneth Ellerbe reminds residents to climb safely when decorating both indoors and outdoors. Ellerbe has these smart tips for ladder safety:

- Before using a ladder outdoors, choose a location that is well away from all power lines. Contact with live wires can be fatal.
- Place the ladder on level ground and open it completely, making sure all locks are engaged.
- Use the 4-to-1 rule for extension ladders. For each four feet between the ground and the upper point of contact (such as the wall or the roof), move the base of the ladder out one foot.
- Always face the ladder when climbing and wear slip-resistant shoes such as those with rubber soles.
- Keep the body centered on the ladder and gauge safety by your belt buckle. If the buckle passes beyond the ladder rail, you are overreaching and at risk of falling.
- Make sure rungs are dry before using the ladder.
- Stand at or below the highest safe standing level on a ladder. For a stepladder, the safe standing level is the second step from the top. For an extension ladder, it's the fourth rung from the top.

For more information on keeping your family safe for the holidays, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 and ask for the Emergency Services Public Education Office or visit the county's website at www.scgov.net.

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