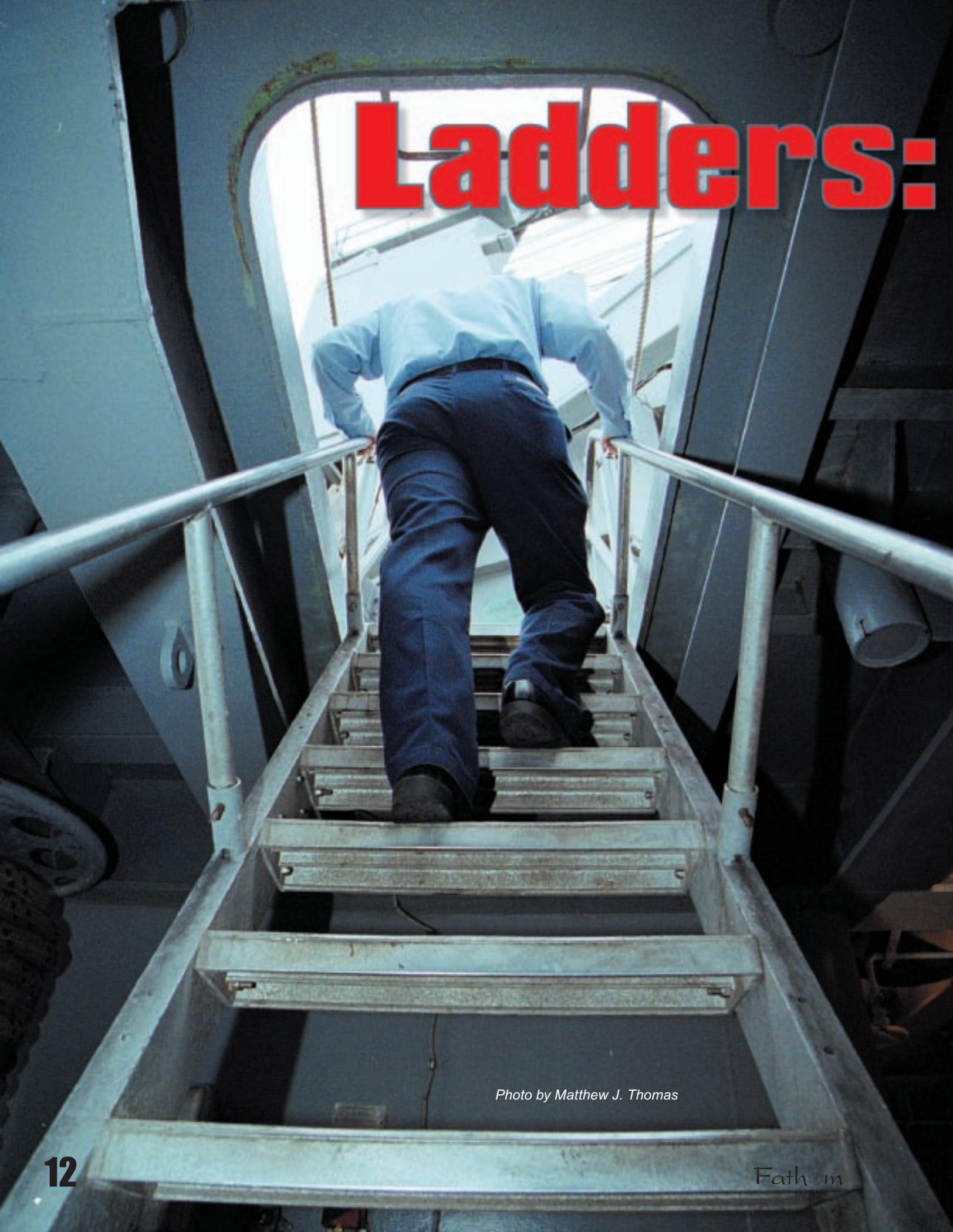


# Ladders:



*Photo by Matthew J. Thomas*

# Take One Step at a Time

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There has been an increase in shipboard ladder mishaps, resulting in light duty, lost workdays, and even unplanned command losses because of injuries. These mishaps primarily resulted from haste, poor situational awareness, and disregard for one's own safety.

Following are some examples of recent ladder mishaps.

✓ A Sailor was descending a ladder to radio central. Darken ship and modified material-condition Zebra were set in the access trunk. The service member had misjudged the last ladder rung and bent his right foot over the rung's leading edge; the bend was at an awkward angle in relation to the rest of his body. The Sailor fractured a small bone in his foot and fell to the deck. He lost 30 workdays while recovering.

✓ Another Sailor quickly was going down a ladder when he lost his footing and balance. He extended his left arm behind him to break his fall, and, on impact, he broke his elbow, resulting in 47 lost workdays.

✓ Meanwhile, another Sailor was preparing to descend a ladder leading from 1st deck to 2nd deck. He placed one foot on the ladder's top rung, then began to place his other foot on the ladder. He lost his grip and fell the length of the ladder, fracturing his left arm, resulting in 40 lost workdays (including light duty).

✓ Finally, a Sailor was climbing a vertical ladder leading from the hangar deck to the 02 level. He had a soda in one hand and a sandwich in the

other. An alert shipmate saw him and warned him about the unsafe act of climbing a ladder while carrying objects in each hand and how it could lead to a fall. As his shipmate was warning him, the climbing Sailor lost his handhold and fell almost two flights to the main, or hangar, deck and broke his right leg. The Sailor required six to nine months of therapy and became an unplanned loss to the command.

Now that those cases have grabbed your attention, here are some ladder-safety tips:

- Always move up or down an inclined ladder holding onto a rail with at least one hand, but, if possible, have each hand holding onto a rail. Always hold on with both hands when climbing or descending vertical ladders.
- Never slide down ladders.
- Post warning signs where decks are slippery, and make sure non-skid strips are installed at the tops and bottoms of all inclined ladders.
- Never dismantle or remove any ladders without the commanding officer's permission.
- Make sure all obstructions in 72-inch, low overheads by inclined ladders, and in 75-inch passageways, are padded adequately, and the padding is in good repair.

You can get the specifics on these safety measures in paragraph C0101 of OpNav Instruction 5100.19D (with change one), and Navy Occupational Safety and Health Program Manual for Forces Afloat under the topic of general safety standards. ☺

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