



TRAILING HAND TECHNIQUE

Naval Safety Center (Code 20)



How do we use the Trailing Hand Technique (THT)?

Naval civilians working on a Navy vessel or Shore activity will frequently descend and ascend stairs or ladderwells during a typical day.

Adding to the risk of daily exposure, often we find these stairs to be narrow and steep. When all of these elements are added to a less than optimal handrail grip, it is easy to see how the chances of injury increase dramatically.

In the pictures are examples of “common,” but unsafe, handrail grips. Think about it: If you fall down the stairs while using one of the grips shown, will your wrist and hand be strong enough to prevent your whole body from falling forward? Probably not!



Common...but unsafe.





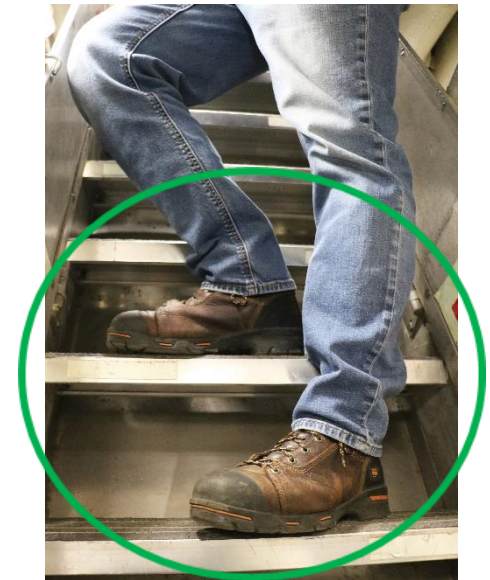
How do we use the Trailing Hand Technique (THT)?

In most cases, we can't stop using stairs to eliminate the risk, but we can mitigate it by using a simple technique for holding the handrail while descending down ladderwells –the **Trailing Hand Technique**.



The Trailing Hand Technique simply consists of **trailing your strongest hand underneath the handrail behind you**, turning your body slightly in order to have **more stepping space on each individual step** and descending the stairs in a more **controlled manner**.

What will happen if you slip or trip using THT? Your chances of falling further down the ladder are significantly reduced because your hand grip is in a much stronger position to catch your fall. You are also more likely to fall into a sitting position or towards the rail rather than than falling forward. This will significantly reduce your chances of the severe bruising or strains associated with shipboard ladder falls.





Further benefits of Trailing Hand Technique



When descending with forward hand grips, boots may not fully engage with the surface of the step.



The slight body rotation will rotate feet, allowing more boot tread on the step surface.





Conclusions from the Trailing Hand Technique:



WRONG: This is without a doubt the most **unsafe** way to descend a ladderwell. By not holding the handrail or maintaining your feet off the steps (i.e. “ladder sliding”) you are totally exposed to a bad fall.



WRONG: Here you may have some protections but risk serious wrist injury and not being able to prevent a forward fall.



RIGHT! Using the Trailing Hand Technique will make using ladderwells safer and significantly reduce risk of injury.



Trailing Hand Technique

Questions?



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