



## PORTABLE LADDERS AND STEP LADDERS POLICY

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### **Introduction**

Use of portable ladders and stepladders at work is governed by the Work at Height Regulations 2005 and the Health and Safety Executive Industry Guidance Note LA455 Safe Use of Ladders and Stepladders.

Falling from height is the biggest single cause of fatal injuries and the second biggest cause of major injuries caused by accidents at work - each year around 30 - 40 fatalities and 3,000 major injuries are caused by falls at work.

Most accidents with ladders and stepladders occur because a ladder has not been secured or positioned properly and either the top or the bottom then slips. Other common causes are:

- Subsidence or failure of the ground supporting the ladder.
- Instability of the ladder caused by misuse.
- Structural failure of the ladder.
- Slippery rungs or treads.

Direct human causes of accidents using ladders of all types include:

- Climbing whilst carrying loads.
- Over-reaching and over-balancing.
- Using the wrong ladder for the intended purpose.
- Insufficient inspection.
- Lack of awareness of the risks associated with ladders.

The Company shall use this document to guide the provision, use, inspection and maintenance of portable ladders and stepladders.

<b>Stage 1</b>	Risk assessment work at height
<b>Stage 2</b>	Provision of ladders selection/suitability for the specific environment
<b>Stage 3</b>	Use positioning and installation
<b>Stage 4/4a</b>	Checking inspection examinations & testing
<b>Stage 5</b>	Manual handling of ladders, training
<b>Stage 6</b>	Storage
<b>Stage 7</b>	User checks
<b>Stage 7</b>	Formal visual inspection
<b>Stage 8</b>	Maintenance
<b>Stage 9</b>	Record keeping
<b>Stage 10</b>	Audit
<b>Stage 11</b>	Monitor



All reference to 'ladders' in this document includes portable ladders and stepladders.

### ***Stage - 1 Risk Assessment***

All work at height shall be subject to an initial risk assessment to ascertain the elements in the hierarchy of control that have been considered and that it is or remains appropriate for the work to be done at height.

The risk assessment shall include consideration of:

- The suitability of the ladder for site conditions.
- The suitability of a ladder for the task (e.g. is it of short duration and light duty?).
- The height of the task.
- Whether the ladder can be positioned close to the task to avoid overreaching, including avoidance of overhead working.
- Whether work can be completed without standing on the top step.
- Whether work can be completed with the ladder at right angles to the work position, to avoid any degree of side loading.
- Whether the ladder will be sited on firm, level ground, with sufficient space for it to be spread to its fullest extent and properly levelled. A ladder shall not be placed on a slippery or icy surface and loose bricks or packing shall not be used.

### ***Stage 2 - Provision of Ladders Selection and Suitability***

The Company shall ensure that all ladders are marked with their conditions and class of use. Any unmarked ladders shall not be used.

Although ladders designated class 1 or 2 are appropriate for work activities, all new ladders purchased shall be rated as class 1, as these are more robust and can take greater loadings.

The Company shall ensure that all new ladders are appropriately marked:

- Aluminium      EN131 Professional (150Kg).
- Glass fibre      BSEN131 Professional (150Kg).
- Step stools      BSEN131 Professional (150Kg).

### ***Stage 3 - Use, Positioning and Installation of Ladders***

The Company shall ensure that:

- Anyone considering using or deploying a ladder to perform work at height, or as a means of access or egress, undertakes a simple risk assessment on every occasion and then follows safe working practices as they go about their tasks.



- Ladders are only used as a means of access and not as a place of work, except where no other suitable means of undertaking the work exists and potentially safer means, such as tower scaffolds, 'cherry-pickers' or other specialist equipment, cannot be used.
- A ladder shall only be used when it is reasonable to do so, considering the duration of the work, the work activity, the height to be reached and any other relevant risks associated with the safety of the work to be carried out.
- Before deploying a ladder, due consideration is given to the suitability of this as a means of access and to the suitability of placement and support of the ladder.
- Only competent persons erect, climb, inspect and maintain ladders.

As well as the physical strength of the ladder, the work environment shall be considered:

- Workers close to electrical circuitry shall use non-conductive ladders, e.g. made of timber or glass fibre, and shall never use metal ladders.

#### ***Stage 4 - Use of a Ladder as a Workplace Checking Examination and Testing***

If a ladder is used as a workplace, the Company shall ensure that:

- The risk of doing so is assessed and controlled, so far as is reasonably practicable.
- The work shall, ideally, only require one hand to be used.
- It is possible to reach the work without stretching.
- The ladder is restrained to prevent slipping, e.g. the ladder is secured by tying with rope (usually at the top) or by utilising other suitable stabilisation devices. Such devices must ensure that the ladder does not run sideways or slide away from the wall.
- A good handhold is available at all times.
- The ladder is only used for the purpose for it is designed.
- Only one person shall be on the ladder at any one time.
- The ladder is erected at a 75 degree angle or approx. one metre out for every four meters up.
- The top point on which the ladder rests is rigid and capable of supporting the applied load.
- Extension ladders have an overlap of two rungs for sections up to 18 rungs length and three rungs for over 18. The ladder should be raised by the user standing on the ground to ensure the locks are engaged. Extension ladders should always be erected so the upper section is above, and resting on, the lower section.
- Where sections of an extension ladder have been used singly, re-assembly is properly carried out and interlocking brackets and guides are correctly engaged.
- Where a ladder is used to gain access to a platform, the ladder extends to a sufficient height (approx. 1m) above any landing place where people will get on and off, unless some other adequate handhold is available as an aid to getting on and off.
- When working from a ladder, the ladder extends to a sufficient height (about 1 m) above any working position to provide a safe handhold.



- Ladders are positioned to avoid the need to overreach– thighs and hips should be kept between the stiles.
- Users do not climb higher than the third rung from the top of a single or extension ladder.
- Users do not climb or work off a ladder unless they can hold onto it – light tools should be carried in a shoulder bag or holster attached to a belt so that both hands are free for climbing. Heavy or bulky loads should not be carried up or down ladders – these should be hoisted manually or by means of other lifting equipment.
- Suitable safety footwear is worn for maintaining grip.
- Climbers always face the ladder when climbing and descending.
- If a ladder is used in a doorway, the door is securely wedged open.

#### ***Stage 4 a - Additional Guidance for Use of Stepladders***

For use of stepladders:

- The user shall not use the top platform of a stepladder unless it is designed with special handholds.
- Stepladders not be used for any work that puts a side loading on them of any significance.

#### ***Stage 5 - Carrying Portable Ladders and Stepladders***

Ladders shall be carried and handled with care and must not be dropped to the ground. Over long distances, it may be more convenient if two people carry the ladder. Extra care shall be taken when carrying ladders during the hours of darkness, over long distances or across rough or unmade ground. Two-section ladders shall never be carried when they are extended.

#### ***Stage 6 - Ladder Storage***

The essentials for good storage are:

- Proper support.
- Protection from weather and harsh environments.
- Ease of access.

When storing ladders, the Company shall ensure that:

- Ladders are supported horizontally and clear of the ground on an adequate number of supports, preferably flat in racks or blocks to avoid twisting.
- A ladder is not hung from its rungs or one stile.
- Where space is scarce, ladders may be stored vertically in suitable racks, provided the stiles are equally and firmly supported.
- Storage racks are under cover.



- Aluminium alloy ladders are kept away from wet lime or concrete, which may cause corrosion.

### ***Stage 7 - Ladder Registration and Inspection***

All ladders and stepladders owned by the Company shall be marked with a unique identifier and registered in a ladder log.

All ladders shall be formally inspected at least annually and a record shall be kept detailing the dates of formal inspections, any defects found and repairs made.

In addition to formal inspections, pre-use checks shall be undertaken by the user before climbing any ladder. These checks need not be formally recorded but if any issues are identified (e.g. cracked / bent stiles or rungs, corrosion defective or missing fittings), the ladder shall not be climbed and the defect shall be reported.

Ladders shall be taken out of use when waiting for repair and destroyed when no longer serviceable.

### ***Stage 8 - Maintenance of Ladders***

The Company shall ensure that:

- Only competent persons carry out repairs.
- Repairs are carried out in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.
- If it is not possible to repair a ladder, it is destroyed.
- All metal parts are checked for tightness and bolts, nuts, screws and rivets are checked and replaced if necessary.
- Wooden ladders are not filled or painted, as this hides potential weak points, but may be preserved with clear varnish.
- Warped or distorted aluminium ladders are destroyed and any corrosion is cleaned, removed, checked and, if it is weakening the ladder, the ladder is destroyed.

### ***Stage 9 - Record Keeping***

The Company shall keep a log of all portable ladders and stepladders.

The Company shall keep records of all formal examinations, inspections and maintenance.

The Company shall keep a register of employees trained to use, inspect and maintain portable ladders and stepladders.

### ***Stage 10 - Monitoring***



The Company shall ensure that activities are adequately supervised and that active monitoring techniques are applied to ensure that the workplace precautions and risk control measures are being applied.

***Stage 11 - Audit***

The Company shall audit the risk assessment on a regular basis and/or when changes in the organisation occur or new equipment is purchased.

***Stage 12 - Review***

The Company shall review and revise the risk assessment on a regular basis and/or when changes in the organisation occur or new equipment is purchased.