



Toolbox Talks

Portable Ladders



Workers must be trained in ladder safety and must follow safe ladder use guidelines every time they use a portable ladder on the job.

- Follow all manufacturer's warnings for the specific type of ladder being used.
- Always inspect every portable ladder before using it. If the ladder is damaged, it must be removed from service and tagged until it has been repaired or properly discarded. Never use a damaged ladder!

Before climbing a ladder, think about where and how it will be set up.

- Read and follow all the instructions and warnings on the ladder.
- Only put ladders on stable and level surfaces unless the base of the ladder is secured to prevent accidental movement.
- When it is necessary to set up a ladder in an area like a passageway, doorway, or driveway, the ladder should be secured, and the area should be barricaded to keep traffic and pedestrians away from the ladder to avoid displacement.
- Never place a ladder on other objects, like boxes, shelving, scaffolds, or pallets, to try to gain more height to access the work area.
- Maintain good housekeeping in the areas near ladders in use.

Only use the ladder in the manner it which it was designed to be used safely.

- Do not use a step ladder in a partially open position. The base must be spread fully open with the spreaders locked.
- Do not use a folded step ladder as an extension ladder.
- Allow at least 3 feet (36 inches) of an extension ladder to extend above the edge or point of support when used to reach another surface.
- Do not leave tools, materials, or equipment on a step ladder when the ladder is not in use. It is very easy to forget about them and when the ladder is shifted the tools can quickly become falling object hazards.

To prevent falls from ladders:

- Keep ladders free of any slippery materials. Always check your shoes before stepping onto a ladder to make sure the soles are free from grease, oil, mud, or anything else that might cause slipping.
- All workers using a ladder must face the ladder when climbing up and down and maintain 3-point contact (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand). Use at least one hand to grasp the ladder when climbing. Do not carry objects or loads while climbing a ladder that could cause loss of balance.
- Avoid overreaching while on a ladder. If the work requires overreaching or precarious balancing, then the ladder should either be moved, a different ladder should be chosen that is more suitable for the task, or an alternate way of completing the task should be determined.

