



JOB AID

LADDER

SAFETY AWARENESS

Ladder Safety Awareness

Falls from ladders are a major source of injury in the workplace and are avoidable.

Choosing the Right Ladder

Use ladders for brief work and occasional access to higher work surfaces. Consider using scaffolds or scissor lifts for strenuous work or pushing and pulling work. Choose the right portable ladder for the job: step, straight (fixed length), extension (variable length) or platform.

Make sure the ladder is rated for the user and any tools or equipment they'll be using (check the label for the duty rating, or how much weight the ladder can safely support).

Fixed ladders are permanent fixtures for predictable, but less than daily, access needs where stairs aren't available.

Inspecting a Ladder

Visually inspect ladders before use for each shift:

- Rungs, steps and siderails
- Feet and non-slip pads (rubbery pads on the bottom of the feet)
- Extension ladder locks, pulley systems and rope/rail guides
- Spreaders (hinged bars between the ladder's legs that lock in place)
- Any casters, wheels and locks

Also inspect a ladder if it tips over, falls, is dropped or is struck by moving equipment. Ladders that are covered in paint or foreign materials can have hidden damage.

If a ladder is defective, remove it from service, tag it and report it to a supervisor or designated competent person.

Setting up a Ladder

Think about stability and the work you will be doing, and consider alternatives (scissor/ aerial lifts, scaffolds, stairs) when frequent access, mobility and stability are concerns.

Never set ladders on top of boxes, bins, vehicles or machinery. Set ladders on a non-slippery, even surface. Before setting up a ladder on a hard surface, clean the bottom of the ladder feet and sweep away sand, dirt and dust that could cause the ladder to slip.

Before setting up a ladder, check hazards (overhead electrical wires may be uninsulated and unguarded). If near a door, add a sign about overhead work and lock or block the door. Clear the area around the base and top of the ladder of debris, tools and other objects. Secure or stabilize the base of the ladder on unstable or unlevel surfaces (some ladders have adjustable feet).

The distance from the base of the ladder to the structure is correct when you place one foot against each side rail, extend your arms straight out in front of you, and can touch a rung without lowering or raising your arms (4:1 or 75-degree angle). Physically secure the ladder if space constraints won't allow setup at a 4:1 (75-degree) ladder angle. To access a higher level, make sure the top of the ladder is 90 centimeters (3 feet) higher than the edge of the structure. Make sure the tallest point you need to reach is accessible from the highest rung for safe standing.

Secure heavily used ladders at the top and bottom by lashing (fastening or tying) them to supporting structures with ropes or straps. Rest both side rails on the top support or wall of the structure and secure the ladder to prevent slipping.

Make sure spreaders are fully open and locked. Lock all ladder sections and parts in place prior to climbing.

Climbing a Ladder

Only one person can be on a ladder at a time, unless it is designed for two people.

Face the ladder to climb or descend it. Keep three points of contact (two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand) on the ladder while climbing and descending it. Never carry any object or load that will interfere with hand holds on the ladder or could cause you to lose your balance and fall.

Prevent Falls

Check ladder safety labels to determine how high you can climb (report missing or illegible safety labels). Don't climb portable ladders higher than the fourth rung from the top of a straight or extension ladder or the second rung from the top of a stepladder. Never stand on the top of a ladder.

Keep the center of your body (your belt buckle area) between the side rails (if you need to leave this range, move the ladder or choose a different tool). Never move, shift or extend ladders being used by others. Never attempt to move or "hop" the ladders you climb (instead get down and relocate the ladder from ground level).

Only use ladders for purposes intended by the manufacturer. Stepladders should be open completely and never leaned against walls. Extension ladders should not be laid across a trench as a runway or platform. Sections of ladders should not be tied together unless designed for the purpose. Never straddle the top step/cap to create a makeshift seat platform.

Be mindful of any tools or materials than can fall and strike the ground or people below.