
Portable Ladder Safety

Falls from portable ladders (step, straight, combination and extension) are one of the leading causes of occupational fatalities and injuries.

* Read and follow all labels/markings on the ladder.
* Avoid electrical hazards! – Look for overhead power lines before handling a ladder. Avoid using a metal ladder near power lines or exposed energized electrical equipment.
* Always inspect the ladder prior to using it. If the ladder is damaged, it must be removed from service and tagged until repaired or discarded.
* Always maintain a 3-point (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand) contact on the ladder when climbing. Keep your body near the middle of the step and always face the ladder while climbing (see diagram).
* Only use ladders and appropriate accessories (ladder levelers, jacks or hooks) for their designed purposes.
* Ladders must be free of any slippery material on the rungs, steps or feet.
* Do not use a self-supporting ladder (e.g., step ladder) as a single ladder or in a partially closed position.
* Do not use the top step/rung of a ladder as a step/rung unless it was designed for that purpose.
* Use a ladder only on a stable and level surface, unless it has been secured (top or bottom) to prevent displacement.
* Do not place a ladder on boxes, barrels or other unstable bases to obtain additional height.
* Do not move or shift a ladder while a person or equipment is on the ladder.
* An extension or straight ladder used to access an elevated surface must extend at least 3 feet above the point of support (see diagram). Do not stand on the three top rungs of a straight, single or extension ladder.
* The proper angle for setting up a ladder is to place its base a quarter of the working length of the ladder from the wall or other vertical surface (see diagram).
* A ladder placed in any location where it can be displaced by other work activities must be secured to prevent displacement or a barricade must be erected to keep traffic away from the ladder.
* Be sure that all locks on an extension ladder are properly engaged.
* Do not exceed the maximum load rating of a ladder. Be aware of the ladder’s load rating and of the weight it is supporting, including the weight of any tools or equipment.
* Do not store or leave tools on a ladder.

**For more information:**

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| OSHA | OccupationalSafety and HealthAdministration |

U.S. Department of Labor
[www.osha.gov](https://www.osha.gov/index.html) (800) 321-OSHA

OSHA 3246-09N-05