

Working Safely with Ladders

Goals

This safety session should teach employees to:

- Understand how to choose, inspect, and use portable ladders correctly.

Applicable Regulation:

Cal OSHA GISO 3276. Portable Ladders

1 Proper ladder selection, inspection, and use can prevent falls and injuries.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards cover ladder design as well as requirements for:

- Inspecting ladders and removing unsafe ladders from use; *and*
- Safe ways to climb and work on ladders.

2 Select the right ladder for the job.

Use a ladder, not a chair or box, to reach heights. The ladder should be:

- Tall enough to reach the height you need.
- Rated to handle the combined weight of you, your materials, and your equipment
 - Ladders are rated **I-AA** (holds 375 pounds (lb)); **I-A** (300 lb); **I** (250 lb); **II** (225 lb); **III** (200 lb. Not usually used on the job).
- Safe for the conditions:
 - Don't use metal ladders around electricity, because metal is a conductor.

3 Inspect every ladder before using it.

- Don't use a ladder that has any missing or broken parts.
 - Tag it as defective, and remove it from service.
 - Don't try to fix a ladder yourself.

A ladder should have:

- No missing parts;
- Firmly attached slip-resistant steps, rungs, or cleats free of grease or oil;
- Tight support braces, bolts, screws, and spreaders;
- Lubricated metal parts;
- Safety feet;
- Rope in good condition (not worn or frayed);
- No splinters or sharp edges; and
- No dents or bent parts in metal ladders.

4 Set up a ladder firmly and properly.

- Don't use a ladder that has any missing or broken parts.
 - Tag it as defective, and remove it from service.
- Extend the ladder at least 3 feet above the top support.
 - Don't rest it on a window or window sash or in front of an unlocked door.

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Working Safely with Ladders

- Anchor the top. Tie the bottom, or have someone hold it.
- Set up straight and extension ladders at the proper angle.
 - The distance from the base of the ladder to the wall or other vertical surface should be one-fourth of the ladder’s working length.
- Never set up a ladder on a box, barrel, or other unstable base to gain height.
- Never tie or fasten ladders together unless they are designed for that purpose.

5 Climb and work on ladders safely.

- Wear shoes with clean, nonskid, nonleather soles.
- Allow only one person at a time on a ladder.
- Climb up and down facing the ladder with at least one hand at all times on rungs or side rails, and maintain 3 points of contact.
- Carry tools on a belt, rope, or hoist.
- Work with one hand on the ladder.
- Don’t stand on the top two stepladder steps or top four ladder rungs.
- Move slowly and cautiously on a ladder.
- Don’t move a ladder while you’re on it.
- Center your body on the ladder so your belt buckle is between the side rails.

Carry and store ladders properly.

- Carry a ladder with another person when possible.
 - If you must carry alone, balance the center on your shoulder. Keep the front end above your head and the back end near the ground.
- Store ladders in a dry, ventilated area kept at a moderate temperature.
- Store ladders standing up, if possible.
 - If they must lie down, support both ends and the middle to prevent sagging or warping.
- Don’t keep anything on a stored ladder, or the ladder will warp.



Discussion Points:

- Ask participants which jobs they perform that would be dangerous with a metal ladder.
- Ask for specific suggestions of how they would carry the tools and materials they use while working on ladders.



Conclusion:

- Attention to portable ladder safety prevents injuries.
- Take the time to choose, inspect, and use a ladder safely.



Test Your Knowledge:

Have your employees take the Working Safely with Ladders quiz. By testing their knowledge, you can judge their understanding of how to prevent these accidents and whether you need to review this important topic again soon.

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