



Ladder Safety (Stepladders)

Goals

This safety session should teach employees to:

- Recognize the potential hazards of stepladder use.
- Use stepladders safely.

Applicable Regulation:
Cal OSHA GISO 3276. Portable Ladders

1 Stepladders are handy. They're portable, self-supporting, and help you get to work areas and work spaces that would otherwise be above your reach. But stepladders also put you at risk of:

- Falls—if you use a ladder that is in poor condition, the wrong size for the job, or improperly set up. You are also at risk of falls if you overload the ladder or are not careful about maintaining contact with and balance on the ladder.
- Electrocution—if you use an electrically conductive ladder near electrical installations or with electric-powered equipment, especially in wet or damp conditions.

2 Before working from a stepladder, inspect the ladder to ensure that it is safe and free of damage.

- Look for any kind of structural damage, such as split or bent side rails, broken or missing rungs/ steps/cleats, and missing or damaged safety devices like safety shoes or feet.
- Make sure the ladder is clean, and in particular, make sure that there is no grease, dirt, or other contamination on the ladder that could lead to a slip and fall.
- Make sure there is nothing on the ladder, like tape or stickers (other than required warning stickers), that could cover up a defect or damage.
- Do not use a ladder that has been painted with an opaque coating or with a coating that could be slippery.
- If you find any problem or defect in a ladder, do not use it. Tag it with "Do not use," and get another ladder.

3 Set up the ladder safely.

- Do not set up a ladder on a slippery or uneven surface.
- Do not set up the ladder on boxes, barrels, stacked pallets, or other unstable surfaces.
- Do not set up a ladder in a high-traffic location where it is at risk from mobile equipment, opening doors or gates, or other hazards that could strike the ladder and knock it over. If necessary, use barriers to keep traffic away from the ladder.
- Keep the area around the top and bottom of the ladder clear.
- Make sure that you open the ladder fully so that the spreaders lock into place.
- Do not set up a conductive ladder in close proximity to electrical installations (power lines) or water if you will be using powered equipment. Make sure that any work you do—from any ladder—is done outside power line clearance distances.

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- Do not use a ladder for a purpose other than the one for which it is designed. For example:
 - Do not use a stepladder as a straight ladder by leaning it against a work surface while folded.
 - Do not use a stepladder as a scaffold or as a scaffold support.
 - Do not use a stepladder to access an upper landing surface (for example, a roof)

Work safely from the ladder.

4

- To work safely from a ladder, DO:
- Always maintain three points of contact with the ladder (two hands and a foot or two feet and a hand) when climbing up or down the ladder or when working from it.
- Face the ladder while climbing up or down.
- Use a tool belt or other system for raising and lowering tools and work materials.
- Check the rated capacity of the ladder, which should be listed on the side rail, to ensure that it will carry the intended load.

To work safely from a ladder, DO NOT:

- Carry items up or down the ladder by hand.
- Overload the ladder.
- Stand on the top step or top cap of the ladder.
- Climb the cross bracing on the rear of the stepladder.
- Lean outside the side rails to perform work.
- Move or shift a ladder while workers or materials are on the ladder.



Discussion Points:

- Workers should not feel pressured to do a job from a ladder if the ladder itself is not safe, if there is no safe place to set up the ladder, or if the ladder cannot be positioned close enough to the work for the work to be performed safely.
- If workers will be on ladders near overhead power lines, go over electrical clearance distances, and make sure workers understand that those distances also apply to any conductive equipment and materials they will be using.



Conclusion:

A ladder can help you reach work locations that would otherwise be inaccessible. But it also creates an additional layer of hazards that you need to be aware of and prepared to protect yourself from. Stay grounded in safety when you're working from a ladder.



Test Your Knowledge:

Have your employees take the Ladder Safety in Construction (Stepladders) quiz. By testing their knowledge, you can judge their understanding of confined space rescue hazards and training requirements and whether they need to review this important topic again soon.

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