

# Ladder Safety

Portable ladders are commonly used tools that allow employees to safely and efficiently complete tasks above ground level. Improper maintenance or misuse of ladders can result in serious injuries, including death. Review this fact sheet for best practices to follow when using a ladder.

## Selecting Your Ladder

- Choose the right ladder based on your weight plus the weight of all tools, materials, and equipment.
- Most ladders are made of these common materials, which have distinct advantages:
  - Wood: Ideal when working around electricity.
  - Fiberglass: Rugged, durable, and acceptable to work around electricity when equipped with nonconductive side rails.
  - Aluminum: Light weight and rugged, though not appropriate for work around electricity.



## Inspecting Your Ladder

- Check rungs, steps, rails, spreaders, and cleats for damage or defects.
- Confirm that bolts, rivets, spreader locks, rung locks, ropes, and other hardware are secure and working properly.
- Ensure that feet have slip-resistant pads in good condition.
- Ensure that labels and stickers are in good condition and legible.
- Remove unsafe ladders from service immediately. Identify with a “Danger – Do Not Use” tag, and notify the supervisor/manager.



## Setting Up Your Ladder

- Always set up ladders on a firm and level surface capable of supporting the anticipated load.
- NEVER lean a ladder against unstable surfaces.
- Ensure spreaders are fully extended and locked.
- Ensure shoes are dry and free of grease or dirt to prevent slips.
- Place base of ladder one foot away from vertical for every four feet of height, measured from the ground to the ladders upper resting point.



## Ladder Safety Tips

- ALWAYS inspect ladders before each use.
- Remove damaged/defective ladders from service.
- Review and follow manufacturer’s guidelines on the ladder’s labels.
- ALWAYS face the ladder while climbing or descending.
- NEVER attempt to move or adjust a ladder when someone is on it.
- Don’t carry tools or equipment when climbing a ladder, use a tool belt or have a coworker hand the tool up to you.
- NEVER stand or sit on the top 2 steps of a ladder.
- When using an extension ladder to access a roof, ensure the ladder extends at least 36” over the top of the parapet.
- DO NOT lean out beyond a ladder’s side rails or carry items in your hands when climbing a ladder.
- ALWAYS maintain 3 points of contact when climbing or descending a ladder (2 hands and 1 foot or 2 feet and 1 hand).
- Ladders placed in any location where they can be displaced by workplace activities or traffic, such as in passageways, doorways, or driveways, should be secured to prevent accidental displacement, or a barricade shall be used to keep the activities or traffic away from the ladder.

## References

- Regulation: OSHA Standard 1910.23: Ladders
- OSHA: [Portable Ladder Safety Quick Card](#)
- OSHA: [Stairways and Ladders: A Guide to OSHA Rules](#)