



# Portable Ladder Safety

Portable ladders come in various types and sizes and should only be used for the purpose for which they were intended. If work cannot be performed safely from a ladder, other positioning equipment, like aerial or scissor lifts, should be used. When selecting the right ladder for the work, consider the length required, working load, duty rating, worker position to task and frequency of use. Refer to the Fall Prevention Program on our Loss Control page for more information on ladder safety: [www.compwestinsurance.com](http://www.compwestinsurance.com).

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## Care, Use, Inspection, Maintenance and Storage

Employees who use ladders must know how to select, properly set up for use and perform inspection to detect any visible defects. The following guidelines should be considered:

- Ladders must be made of fiberglass or composite non-conductive materials; wood or metal ladders are prohibited.
- The top two steps and platform of a stepladder, and the top three rungs of a straight ladder, should not be used.
- Ladders used to gain access to an upper landing surface should be long enough that the side rails extend above the top support point by at least 36 inches and create a strong upper resting point.
- Ladders should be inspected prior to each use. See below for inspection guidelines.
- Ladders should be stored upright and secured to a permanent structure by hooks, brackets or another effective method.
- Consider the weight of the employee in addition to the weight for all required job tools and materials prior to selecting a ladder.

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### Follow the guidelines on the load sticker to determine the best ladder for the job:

- ✓ Economical design for lightweight use – Type III, 200-pound load capacity
  - ✓ Basic design for simple projects – Type II, 225-pound load capacity
  - ✓ Designed to handle most projects and jobs – Type I, 250-pound load capacity
  - ✓ Rugged performance designed with the ‘professional’ in mind – Type IA, 300-pound load capacity
  - ✓ Maximum performance and durability for the ‘toughest jobs’ – Type IAA, 375-pound load capacity
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## Setup for Use

- Splicing short ladders to form a longer ladder is prohibited. Ladders are not to be tied, fastened together or modified in any way.
- Never place ladders on unstable surfaces, such as boxes, barrels, or any other unstable basis, for additional height.
- Use ladders on only clean, stable and level surfaces unless secured to prevent accidental movement (don't shim or prop). Although ladder feet or shoes provide an important measure of safety, they cannot compensate for uneven ground unless they are designed with adjustable feet.
- Always use the 1-to-4 rule. Place the base of straight ladders away from the wall or edge of upper level one foot for every four feet of vertical height.
- Where possible, secure the top of straight ladders with a rope or wire and the bottom with a block.
- Ensure both automatic locks of an extension ladder are in proper position.
- Provide barricades and warning signs when ladders are placed near doors or other locations where they could be struck by moving equipment or people.



## Inspections

Employees must perform a visual ladder inspection before each use, including the following elements:

- Check for broken or missing rungs and cleats, broken side rails and other damaged parts. Cleats, rungs and side rails must be free of grease, oil, paint and other slippery substances.
- The ladder should be equipped with feet that are secured in place.
- The joint between steps and side rails must be tight, and hardware and fittings should be securely attached. Moveable parts should operate freely without binding or undue play.
- Check for shakes, warpage, decay, dents, bends in the side rails, rungs or cleats.
- Check step-to-side rail connections, hardware connections and rivets.
- If a ladder tips over, inspect for damage. Report and remove a damaged ladder from service and mark it with the words "Do not use" until it can be properly destroyed and discarded.

## Basic Safety Rules

- Do not use ladders for unintended purposes.
- Face the ladder and use the handrail.
- Always maintain three points of contact with the ladder (i.e., two feet and one hand or two hands and one foot). This applies to ascending and descending the ladder.
- Utilize the “belt buckle rule.” Do not lean so far that your belt buckle would extend farther than the outside of a ladder’s side rails. If your belt buckle extends farther than the outside of the side rails, the ladder is insufficient for the job.
- Raise tools or materials with a rope after reaching the working position. Do not carry heavy loads.
- Ladders are not to be used by more than one person at a time. The bracing on the backside rails of stepladders is intended only for stability, not climbing.
- Step ladders are not to be used as single ladders or in the partially closed position.
- Ladders shall not be used horizontally as platforms, runways or scaffolds.
- Straight ladders and stepladders exceeding 10 feet are to be held stable by another person.
- Extension ladders must have proper overlap:
  - Three-foot overlap for 32-foot ladder
  - Four-foot overlap for 32- to 36-foot ladder
  - Five-foot overlap for 32- to 36-foot ladder
  - Six-foot overlap for 48-foot ladder
- No employee should repair or fabricate improvised ladders. Never try to straighten a bent or bowed ladder. Remove it from service.

