

## Safe use of Platform Ladders

### 1. Introduction

This Information Sheet is limited to portable industrial rated platform ladders where light work will be carried out for short and long periods of time. If longer duration work is required a more permanent option is required (e.g. scaffolding).

The purpose of this Information Sheet is to minimise the risk of a fall. Falls occur for a number of reasons:

- poor condition ladder
- improper ladder for task
- poorly located and or incorrectly positioned
- situated on slippery or uneven surface
- correct techniques not being followed.

It is important to select the correct ladder for the task. Before a ladder is chosen, the anticipated use and load capacity needs to be determined.

- Load ratings, safe working height, and other safety information must be posted on the ladder by the manufacturer. This information should be replaced if it becomes worn or defaced. The rated capacity must be sufficient to accommodate the weight of the person and everything that they are carrying. All ladders used by University personnel or by persons using this SOP must comply with AS/NZ 1892 and have the industrial load rating for 150kg. Anything less than 150kg must be removed from use immediately.
- Ladders may not be the best choice for the task. An elevated work platform may be the better choice. Use scaffolding or elevated work platforms if;
  - Carrying heavy loads.
  - Where it is necessary for a person to shift their centre of gravity while conducting work at an elevated height.
  - The floor where ladder is to be placed is not level and stable for four legs to make contact.
  - Three points of body contact cannot be maintained.
  - The platform ladder cannot be fully opened with spreader bars locked and secure.
- Remember to face towards the ladder at all times, never sit or stand on the top cap or use the rails around the top as a step or seat. Only one person at a time on the platform ladder and stand in the centre of the platform.
- Ladders are not to be erected within 4m of power lines.
- Only light work is to be carried out using a platform ladder

As long as this SOP is followed correctly, the SOP can be applied to any task involving a platform ladder described within.

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Equipment that can be used on a platform ladder will be identified within their respective SOPs.

## 2. Training requirement

Course	Internal or external	Unit Standards
Deemed competent in use of platform ladder	Internal	N/A
Safe use of a ladder (platform)	Internal	N/A

## 3. Hazards that may be present

All hazards that can be identified needs to be included in the table below:

Hazard	Risk	Who is at risk	Risk Rating	Control measures	Residue Risk Rating
Poor quality platform ladder	Collapse/slipping	Workers using the platform ladder	Medium	Six-monthly inspections, pre-use inspection and point of use daily inspections	Low
Platform ladder rocking or skipping out at the feet	Potential serious fall injury, broken bones, brain injury etc	Workers using the platform ladder	High	Ensure level and even surface with sufficient room to place each foot of the platform ladder	Low
Falling due to over balancing	Potential serious fall injury, broken bones, brain injury etc	Workers using the platform ladder	High	Always stand facing the ladder, in the centre of the platform and maintain body weight within the platform ladder perimeter	Low
Falling or collapse due to more than one person on the platform ladder	Potential serious fall injury, broken bones, brain injury etc	Workers using the platform ladder	High	Only one person to use a platform ladder at any time. A second person may assist with materials, tools.	Low

Hazard	Risk	Who is at risk	Risk Rating	Control measures	Residue Risk Rating
Transporting or moving the platform ladder between locations	Electrical Hazards, knocking light fittings, damaging building fabrics etc.	Worker transporting the platform ladder	Medium	Check for overhead hazards, turn platform ladder to horizontal position when transporting. Use 2 persons to transport platform ladders in restricted locations.	Low
Incorrect positioning on platform ladder	Sitting or standing on top cap or rails	Worker using the platform ladder	High	Always stand in the centre of the platform facing the ladder	Low
Climbing with loads	Tools, materials or equipment left on the platform ladder falling off	Worker using or transporting the platform ladder	Medium	Do not place tools, materials or equipment on the platform ladder. Either wear a tool belt, secure tools with a lanyard or have a second person passing materials or equipment to the platform ladder user as required.	Low
Falling due to incorrect use whilst moving the platform ladder	Potential serious fall injury, broken bones, brain injury etc	Worker using the platform ladder	High	Only move the ladder when not in use (do not 'walk' the platform ladder whilst still on it)	Low
Falling or jolting whilst on the platform ladder with castors	Potential serious fall injury, broken bones, brain injury etc	Worker using the platform ladder	Medium	Ensure castor locks are secure on the feet of the platform ladder	Low

#### 4. Required PPE

Wear suitable footwear (slip resistant with steel caps).

#### 5. Other equipment required

- Hand tools
- Power tools
- Signage
- Cones and barriers

#### 6. Step-by-step process

Familiarise yourself with the Platform Ladder-Specific Safety Instructions. Consider the job-specific application of the platform ladder and if it is suitable for the task to be completed. Is the platform ladder the correct tool for the job, is it the correct height, can it be placed in on suitable ground to gain access to the work required.

Visually check platform ladder for defects prior to use.

##### **Erecting the ladder**

Complete as much of the task at ground level as possible.

Ensure that the ladder is placed on a dry, firm, level ground surface. Uneven footing may cause the ladder to rock and should not be used. If the ladder is not stable, reposition the ladder until all feet have firm and solid contact with the floor. Always check there is no rocking movement before climbing the ladder.

If castors are fitted to the ladder, ensure that the rubber feet have firm contact with the floor when the springs are depressed.

Ensure the ladder is fully opened and the spreader bar is locked into position.

##### **Ascending and descending the ladder**

Proper climbing technique is important to prevent slipping and falling.

- Face the ladder while climbing and descending
- Maintain three points of contact at all times.
- Keep your body within the stiles
- Keep you back straight so you have freedom to move your arms and legs.
- Move your body in smooth fluid motion. Try not to do sudden moves as this may destabilise the ladder.

### Returning the ladder

When returning the platform ladder after completion of the work, ensure all parts are complete and in place.

Report any damage or deterioration to the platform ladder and remove the platform ladder from service if there are any defects or concerns regarding its continued safe use and either destroy or properly label the equipment appropriately.

### Working off the ladder

Most accidents occur from overreaching. It is vital that your chest stays within the platform at all times.

## 7. Useful information

### Quick step safety check list guide

- Is the ladder suitable for Trade use? (AS/NZS 1892)
- Are all fixed joints secure and free from damage or movement?
- Are the hand safety rails and platform plate securely attached?
- Are all stiles, steps, handrails etc. straight and free from damage?
- Is the Platform Ladder free from corrosion?
- Is the ladder rigid and free from movement when set up?
- Are moving and mechanical parts operational & working correctly?
- Are the ropes, feet rubbers & any castors in place, operational and in good order?

## 8. Relevant resources

- WorkSafe NZ Safe Working with Ladders and Stepladders Fact Sheet

## 9. Signed and dated

By signing below, you certify that you have read this safe operating procedure, that you understand how to correctly follow the procedure and that you have confirmed that the safe operating procedure is true and accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signed**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Dated**