

Safe Use of Step Ladders

1. Introduction

This information sheet is for the safe use of portable step ladders where work will be carried out for a short period of time and for light work. This SOP is not valid for long duration work (more than 30 minutes). If long duration work is required, a more permanent solution is required (e.g. scaffolding or platform).

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.
 - 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.

2. Training requirement

Course	Internal or external	Unit Standards
Deemed competent in use of step ladder	Internal	NA

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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	Comments	Residue risk rating
Poor quality ladder	Collapse / slipping	Workers using the ladder	High	6-monthly inspections and pre-use inspection.		Low
Ladder rocking or skipping out at the feet	Potential serious fall injury, broken bones, brain injury etc.	Workers using the ladder	High	Ensure level and even surface with sufficient room to place each foot of the ladder, ensure stays are in place.		Medium
Falling due to over balancing	Potential serious fall injury, broken bones, brain injury etc.	Workers using the ladder	High	Always stand facing the ladder, in the centre of the ladder and maintain body weight within the ladder perimeter. Maintain three points of contact.		Low
Falling or collapse due to more than one person on the ladder	Potential serious fall injury, broken bones, brain injury etc.	Workers using the ladder	High	Only one person to use a ladder at any time. A second person may assist with materials, tools or to steady the ladder.		Low
Transporting or moving the ladder between locations	Electrical hazards, knocking light fittings, damaging building fabrics etc.	Worker transporting the ladder	Medium	Check for overhead hazards, turn ladder to horizontal position when transporting. Use two persons to transport ladders in restricted locations.		Low



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Hazard	Risk	Who is at risk	Risk rating	Control measures	Comments	Residue risk rating
Climbing with loads	Tools, materials or equipment left on the ladder falling off	Worker using or transporting the ladder	Medium	Do not place tools, materials or equipment on the ladder. Either wear a tool belt, secure tools with a lanyard or have a second person passing materials or equipment to the ladder user as required.		Low

4. Required PPE

- Use appropriate footwear; slip resistant, closed toe and sturdy.
- No loose clothing or flapping parts that can restrict movement when climbing.

5. Other equipment required

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

6. Step-by-step process

- Familiarise yourself with the safety instructions on the ladder.
- Wear slip-resistant footwear. Never wear sandals, high heels or flip-flops. Wear appropriate clothing (e.g. no loose or flapping clothing, clothing does not restrict movement when climbing).
- Do not use if affected by a medical condition or medication.
- Keep ladder clear of live wires, electrical hazards and ceiling fans.
- When transporting your ladder check for overhead power lines, live wires or electrical hazards.
- Carefully inspect your ladder to ensure there are no worn parts or damage before climbing:
 - Joints between steps and side rails tight, all fittings secure, moving parts operate freely.
 - Rungs are free of grit, oil and grease, welds are intact.
 - All components of ladder intact including side rails, steps, rungs, cleats, feet, castors.
- If any component is found to be worn or damaged tag and remove from service. **Rectify any faults before use.**

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- Have I informed others that may be affected by my work?
- Am I safe from other activities / tasks in the area?
- Complete as much of the task at ground level as possible.
- Ensure the ladder is placed on dry, firm, level ground/floor. Uneven footing may cause the ladder to rock. If this occurs reposition the ladder until all feet have firm contact with the floor. Always check there is no rocking movement before climbing the ladder.
- If castors are fitted to the ladder, ensure rubber feet have firm contact with the floor when the springs are depressed.
- Ensure the ladder is secured against slipping or sliding and/or there is another person holding the base of the ladder.
- Only one person is permitted on the ladder at any time. A second person may stand alongside the ladder and help to steady it, or pass materials/tools up if required. Do not lift heavy weights that unbalance the ladder.
- Ensure the ladder is fully opened and the spreader bar is locked into position. Check for overhead obstructions before climbing.
- Only light work is to be undertaken on the ladder. Always face towards the ladder when climbing and always maintain three points of contact with the ladder. Use a tool bag or tool belt to help to keep hands free.
- **Never stand on the top two steps.**
- Do not over-reach whilst using the ladder. Maintain the majority of your body weight inside the perimeter of the ladder feet.
- Always climb down to shift position. Do not “walk” the ladder whilst on it.
- Be mindful of your concentration and fatigue level. Avoid becoming overconfident when using ladders during repetitive tasks.
- Be aware of others that maybe working nearby.

7. Useful information

Quick step safety checklist guide:

- Is the ladder suitable for Trade use?
- Are all fixed joints secure and free from damage or movement?
- Are all stiles, steps, handrails etc. straight and free from damage?
- Is the Ladder free from corrosion?
- Are moving and mechanical parts operational and working correctly?
- Are the feet rubbers and any castors in place, operational and in good order?

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8. 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_____
Date