

Safe Use of Ladders

It is estimated that costs of \$17 million are generated from falls from ladders in New Zealand in any one year! Where working at height cannot be avoided, the use of a ladder is the least preferred option. Always determine if a ladder is the best and safest means of doing the job. If you are required to use a ladder, there are some safety guidelines within this document.

1.1 Ladder inspection checklist

Ladders in use should have a visual inspection prior to use, and at least an annual thorough inspection. The use of wooden ladders is not encouraged. Aluminium ladders can be returned to the supplier for the annual ladder check.

General	Needs repair	OK	Date repaired
Missing or loose steps or rungs? (Considered loose if they can be moved at all with the hand.)			
Signs of corrosion, rust, oxidation?			
Loose nails, screws, bolts or other metal parts?			
Cracked, split, or broken uprights, braces or rungs?			
Twisted or distorted styles?			
Slivers on uprights, rungs or steps?			
Damaged or worn non-slip bases?			
Stepladders			
Wobbly (from side strain)?			
Loose or bent hinge spreaders?			
Stop on hinge spreaders broken?			
Loose hinges?			
Worn, broken or missing cords?			
Broken, spilt or worn steps?			
Extension ladders			
Loose, broken or missing extension locks?			
Defective locks that do not seat properly while extended?			
Rusted or corroded metal parts?			
Worn or rotted rope?			
Trestles			
Loose hinges?			
Wobbly?			



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General	Needs repair	OK	Date repaired
Loose or bent hinge spreaders?			
Stop on hinge spreader broken?			
Centre section guide for extension out of alignment?			
Defective locks for extension?			

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Safe Use of Ladder Guidelines

Secure the ladder as soon as it is placed. Prevent the ladder's feet from slipping outwards and the ladder's top end from moving sideways or backwards.

Rest the top of the ladder against a solid surface that can withstand the load.

Attach hooks on top of the ladder rails where the ladder is to be used at a constant height.

Attach a ladder stay across the back of a ladder where a surface cannot stand the load. Extend the stays across a window for firm support against the building walls or window frame.

Station a person at the foot of a ladder when it is not possible to tie at the top or secure it at the foot. (This is effective only for ladders up to 5 metres long). Ensure that the person at the foot of the ladder faces the ladder with a hand on each side rail and one foot resting on the bottom rung.

The correct angle for a ladder is one unit of measurement out for every four units of height.

Do not rest a ladder on any rung. Only the side rails are designed for this purpose.

Only one person should be using the ladder at any one time.

Keep three points of contact between yourself and the ladder at all times. Always face the ladder and use both hands when climbing. Always grasp the rungs when climbing, not the side rails. If your foot slips on a ladder, holding on to the rungs is easier than holding on to the side rails.

Set the ladder on a firm, even surface. Never use a ladder on a surface where one foot can sink into the ground. Use a board or plank under the feet to stop them from sinking.

Wear shoes with heels when climbing a ladder. Clean the soles of shoes prior to climbing if they are slippery. Avoid climbing with wet soles.

Raise or lower tools or materials using a hand line.

Never over-reach sideways. Climb down and move the ladder.

Work should be carried out from a rung or step no higher than one meter below the top of the ladder. Never work any higher than three steps down from the top of a ladder.

Ensure no one is underneath the area of work being performed. Set up suitable barriers (e.g. cones) around ladders.

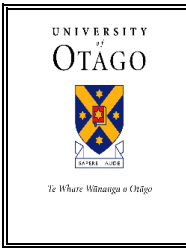
Never hang tools or other items from the steps or rungs.

When working around doors ensure they are locked securely.

Ladders should not be left unattended in an erect position. Store safely where children can't access them.

Always check for overhead wires.

When carrying ladders, distribute weight evenly by placing your shoulder half way alongside the stile.



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Stepladders
NEVER EXTEND A STEPLADDER OUT TO FORM A SINGLE LENGTH LADDER – they are prone to breaking, resulting in a fall.
Use a stepladder that is about 1 metre shorter than the highest point you have to reach. This gives a wider, more stable base and places shelf at a convenient working height.
Place a stepladder at right angles to the work, with either the front or back of the steps facing the work.
Avoid pushing or pulling stepladders from the side. Repeated movement can make ladders wobbly since they are weaker or less stable in those directions.
Face the stepladder when climbing up or down. Keep your body centred between the side rails. You have climbed too high if your knees are above the top of the stepladder or if you cannot maintain a handhold on the ladder.
Maintain a firm grip. Use both hands when climbing.
Do not climb a stepladder that is leaning against a wall – use a straight ladder instead.
Never work from the top treads.
Do not 'shift' or 'walk' a stepladder when standing on it.
Do not attempt to over-reach when working from a stepladder.
Always face the stepladder treads.
Do not use a stepladder for access or egress into another workspace – use another type of ladder such as a pole ladder.
Do not place a stepladder on boxes or scaffolds to gain extra height.
Never use a stepladder with a single or temporary stay.
Never use a stepladder as a support for a working platform.

This information was summarised from the following websites. Contact these websites if you require more information:

www.acc.co.nz/injury-prevention/safer-industries/construction/plant/ladders

www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/safety_haz/ladders

www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/Publications/OHS/SafetyGuides/Protladd.html

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