

impact hr toolbox talk

Using Ladders & Stepladders

The purpose of this talk is to ensure that ladders and stepladders are selected, inspected and used safely, and only where they are suitable for the task. Incorrect use of access equipment remains a common cause of serious injury. Ladders and stepladders should be used only where the work is short in duration and low risk, and where it is not reasonably practicable to use a safer alternative (eg hop-up, trestle, podium step, tower, or scaffold).

What are the hazards?

Falls from height remain one of the leading causes of serious injury at work. Inappropriate selection or unsafe use of ladders and stepladders can result in falls, dropped objects and injuries to the user and others nearby.

Ladders and stepladders are commonly used for short-duration access tasks. If they are used incorrectly, positioned poorly or left unattended, they can present significant risks.

Who might be harmed and how?

- **Operatives** – falls resulting in fractures, head injuries or serious harm
- **Anyone bystanding including children** – struck by falling tools, materials or unsecured equipment ladders

Risks may increase in occupied areas where people, including children may pass beneath or close to the work activity.

When Ladders & Stepladders may be used

Ladders and stepladders should only be used for short-duration, low-risk tasks, where it is not reasonably practicable to use alternative equipment such as podium steps or scaffold.

Examples include:

- Minor drilling or fixing
- Adjustments or inspections
- Light maintenance tasks

They should not be used:

- For heavy or strenuous work
- Where side loading or overreaching is required
- For tasks of long duration

Equipment selection

- Only EN131 "Professional" ladders and stepladders should be used
- Avoid "domestic" grade ladders on all site work
- Equipment must be suitable for the task and the working environment

All ladders and stepladders:

- Are recorded on a central equipment register
- Are subject to periodic inspection
- Must be visually checked before each use

Any defective equipment must be removed from use immediately and reported.

Pre-use checks

Before each daily use, you should check:

- Stiles, rungs and steps for damage or cracks
- Ladder feet are present, secure and not excessively worn
- Locking bars and spreaders operate correctly
- Ladder is clean of paint, grease or debris

If defects are identified, the ladder / stepladder must not be used.



Stepladders

- Fully open the ladder and engage locking devices
- Use only on firm, level ground
- Do not stand on the top step unless it is designed for standing
- Maintain three points of contact
- Do not overreach (keep your belt buckle within the stiles)

Ladders

- Set the ladder at the correct angle (1:4 ratio)
- Secure the ladder where practicable to prevent movement

- Ensure ladders extend at least 1 metre above the landing point where access is required
- Always face the ladder when climbing & descending

Tools, Materials & Falling Objects

- Use tool belts where practicable
- Do not carry loose items while climbing
- Do not leave tools or materials on steps or platforms
- Keep the area below clear and adequately segregated.

Remember

Don't leave ladders unattended. Remove from the area when not in use

Position away from doors, walkways and access routes where possible

Avoid carrying heavy or bulky items

Don't overreach! Move the ladder while standing on it

Use barriers where possible

Increased vigilance is required where children are present

Discussion Points

When should ladders and stepladders be used?

Describe what to look for during a pre-use check

Is your ladder marked EN131 "Professional"?

How should stepladders be safely used?

How should ladders be safely used?

Your next step to safer, smarter workplaces

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