



OH&S Bulletin

Safe Use of Ladders

You are more likely to sustain serious head injuries falling from a low height, like a ladder or small scaffold, than from a moderate height, because you don't have time to turn around and break your fall. People in the construction industry get used to working at height and can get pretty casual about it.

Ladders are not work platforms! Work should not be done from a ladder unless there is absolutely no alternative. If you must use a ladder there are some guidelines for their safe use.

General

- Ladders must be of industrial standard.
- A person should always have two hands free to ascend and descend a ladder (ie. all material and tools which cannot be safely secured from the belt should be independently transferred to the work location).
- Ladders should be secured against movement and be supported from a firm, level, non-slip surface.
- All work from a ladder should be performed while facing the ladder.
- A person's feet should not be higher than 900 mm from the top of a ladder.
- No task should require over reaching (ie the belt buckle should always be within the stiles of the ladder).
- There should be no danger of crane-lifted loads trapping or striking a person on a ladder.
- No person on a ladder should work over another person.
- Only one person should be on a ladder at any time.
- Ladders should not be used in access areas or



within the arc of swinging doors.

- Work involving restricted vision or hot work (such as welding or oxy-cutting) should not be performed from a ladder.
- Ladders should not be set up on scaffolding or elevating work platforms to gain extra height.
- Small light loads of tools or materials easily handled by one person only, may be raised or lowered with a handline.
- Ladders should not be handled or used where it is possible for the ladder or the user to come into contact with electrical power lines.

· The use of power tools on a ladder should be restricted to those that are easily operated one handed. Drills should have a clutch system so that if it jams it doesn't throw you off the ladder.

Single and Extensions Ladders

- Single and extension ladders should:
 - be placed at a slope of 4 to 1
 - be footed or secured top and bottom.
- The person working from a single or extension ladder should be able to brace themselves at all times.

Step Ladders

- Step ladders should only be used in fully opened position.
- A person's feet should be no higher than the third tread from the top plate.
- A step ladder must not be used near the edge of an open floor or penetration where, if the ladder toppled, a person could fall over that edge.
- If using power tools on step ladders, the ladder must be footed.

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