



## PORTABLE LADDER SAFETY

Inspection • Use • Maintenance



According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), over 40% of fatal falls involve ladders, and thousands are injured from ladder falls each year.

This Safety Talk provides a condensed version of the Cal/OSHA Portable Ladder Safety [E-Tool](#). If you regularly use portable ladders, we recommend a thorough review of the Etool.

### PLAN AHEAD

The first step is to evaluate the job and determine the types of ladder(s) needed. This step will reduce the potential for falls.

### INSPECTIONS

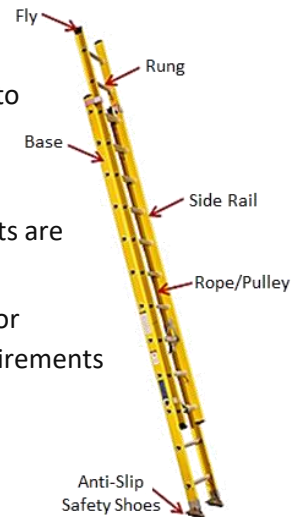
Ladders should always be inspected for visible defects before each use. Check for:

- Lack of structural integrity, missing components, or loose parts.
- Tight and secure step rungs.
- Securely attached hardware and fittings.
- Intact and readable labels.
- Oil, grease, or slippery materials and remove before use.
- Condition of accessories (leg levelers, paint shelves, stand-off shelves, etc.).
- Slip resistant material at the ladder base.

While inspecting extensions ladders make sure:

- Ropes and pulleys are in good condition.
- Ladder extension locks move freely and lock correctly.
- Rung locks are on the rails of the top section to ensure the top section will not fall.
- Extension guide brackets are secure and in place.

Take a look at the *E-Tool* for additional inspection requirements by ladder type.



### SAFE USE

#### Ladder Position

- Make sure the base is placed on secure and level footing. Use ladder levelers for uneven surfaces.
- Ensure ladder is sitting straight and secure before climbing it.
- Keep the area clear around the top and bottom of a ladder.
- In crowded areas, use warning signs or barricades to guide traffic away or use a spotter to hold and guard the bottom of the ladder.
- Try to avoid hallways, passageways, doorways, driveways or heavy traffic areas. Never set up a ladder in front of a door unless the door is locked or a guard is posted.

## SAFE USE

### Ladder Position Continued

- Use the right ladder for the job. Do not set ladders on unstable bases to reach farther.
- Avoid setting up or using a ladder in high winds, especially a lightweight metal or fiberglass type.
- For every 4 feet in height, place the base of the ladder one foot away from whatever the top of the ladder leans against (wall, post, etc.)

### Securing Ladders

- The ladder must be placed to prevent slipping, or it must be secured (tied, blocked, held).
- Make sure the top support is supported equally on the two rails.
- When using an extension ladder, the side rails must extend at least 36 inches above the upper landing surface. If an extension is not possible, the top of the ladder must be secured, and a grasping device must be provided for mounting and dismounting the ladder.

### Climbing/Working On Ladders

- Always follow manufacturer's recommendations for proper use and follow all labels/markings on the ladder.
- Do not stand on the topcap or the step below the topcap of a step ladder.
- Do not stand on the on the top 3 rungs of a single or extension ladder. If you must, make sure there are structures that provide a firm handhold, or you can use a personal fall protection system.
- Climb or work with the body near the middle to keep the load centered.

- Face the ladder and always maintain three-points of contact (two feet one hand, or two hands one foot).
- Unless secured (tool belt), do not carry equipment or materials on ladders. Have coworkers hand up tools and equipment.



- Do not overreach from the center position. Descend and reposition the ladder. When it's not practical, secure the ladder at the top and use a personal fall protection system.
- Do not move, shift, or extend ladders while in use.
- Never use a ladder on a scaffold platform.
- Be sure that all locks on an extension ladder are properly engaged.
- Make sure the spreader is locked on a stepladder.
- Never use metal ladders around exposed electrical wiring or overhead power lines. Use non-conductive ladders in wet and damp locations where electrical work is anticipated (wood, fiberglass).
- Wear shoes with slip resistant soles.
- Clean mud and other slippery substances off your shoes and ladder rungs before climbing the ladder.
- When moving an extension ladder always retract the "fly" section(s).
- When carrying an extension ladder keep the bottom section lower than the top. Use a ladder dolly to help you carry heavy ladders.