

OSHA Ladders Safety Regulations

Does this apply to me?

If your workers use any type of ladder for their work the OSHA rules must be followed.

What does this cover?

OSHA rules cover all step ladders, straight ladders and extension ladders whether they are wood, fiberglass or metal. There are rules for installing and using them properly as well as inspecting them. There are also rules for training workers before they use ladders.

What else do I need to know?

Ladders are the most widely used piece of equipment on construction sites and need to be set up, inspected and used properly every time they are moved to a new work area.

Securing the ladder

Straight and Extension ladders have to be secured so they don't slip or kick out and cause a fall. Tying off at the top keeps the ladder from slipping sideways but also think about securing the bottom, especially if the ladder will be in place for more than a day.

Inspecting ladders

Consider that ladders are not always cared for and can get pretty beat up from constant use. All ladders need to be checked/inspected before they are used. Cracks, loose rivets/bolts and damaged rungs may eventually cause the ladder to fail. Don't allow any workers to "fix" a ladder, only the manufacturer can do that.

Ladder set-up

Most construction workers have heard of the "4:1 rule" which means the bottom of the ladder should be placed 1 foot away from a wall for every 4 feet in wall height. This is how the ladder is tested and gets its capacity rating (Type I, Type IA or Type IAA). Ladders with a designated capacity are the only types of ladders that should be used. Look on the side rail for the ladder Type and rating which will be 250lb, 300lb or 375lb.

Step ladder use

Only allow step ladders to be set-up with the side locking arms locked in place, never allow a step ladder to be leaned against a surface.

Traffic areas

Consider using cones or caution tape around ladders where other equipment is operating or when the ladder might be out of view like around corners or doorways.

What about training?

OSHA rules are in place that require all workers who use a ladder to be trained on proper use, inspection and placement. Workers should know not to overreach and should follow the "belt buckle rule" which means keeping their belt buckle between the side rails. Make sure you document the training.

Where can I get more help?

The Hanover Risk Solutions website has additional information that you can review or use for worker training. Additional resources can also be found on the OSHA website and they even have a dedicated place just for Ladders (and includes stairways) at <http://www.osha.gov/doc/outreachtraining/htmlfiles/stairlad.html> and http://www.osha.gov/Publications/portable_ladder_qc.html

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