

Reducing Falls in Construction: Safe Use of Stepladders

Workers who use ladders in construction risk permanent injury or death from falls and electrocutions. These hazards can be eliminated or substantially reduced by following good safety practices. This fact sheet examines some of the hazards workers may encounter while working on **stepladders** and explains what employers and workers can do to reduce injuries. OSHA's requirements for stepladders are in Subpart X—Stairways and Ladders of OSHA's Construction standards.

What is a Stepladder?

A **stepladder** is a portable, self-supporting, A-frame ladder. It has two front side rails and two rear side rails. Generally, there are steps mounted between the front side rails and bracing between the rear side rails. (See Figure 1, below.)

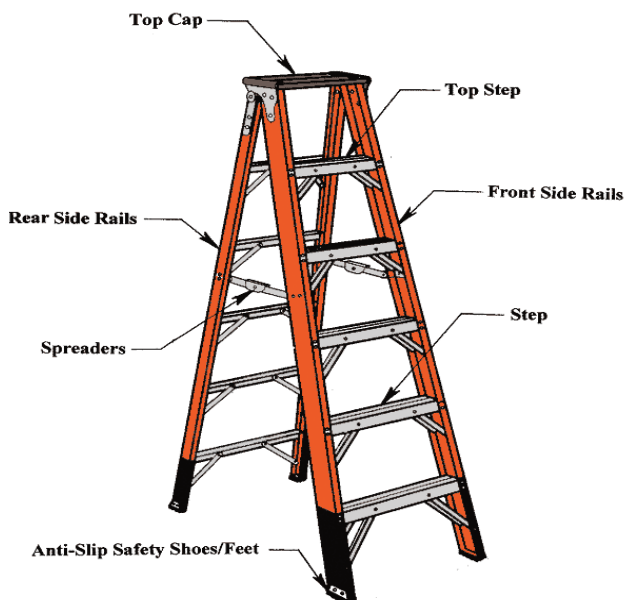


Figure 1: Stepladder

PLAN Ahead to Get the Job Done Safely.

A competent person must visually inspect stepladders for visible defects on a periodic basis and after any occurrence that could affect their safe use. Defects include, but are not limited to:

- Structural damage, split/bent side rails, broken or missing rungs/steps/cleats and missing or damaged safety devices.

- Grease, dirt or other contaminants that could cause slips or falls.
- Paint or stickers (except warning or safety labels) that could hide possible defects.

PROVIDE the Right Stepladder for the Job with the Proper Load Capacity.

- Use a ladder that can sustain at least four times the maximum intended load, except that each extra-heavy duty type 1A metal or plastic ladder shall sustain at least 3.3 times the maximum intended load. Also acceptable are ladders that meet the requirements set forth in Appendix A of Subpart X. Follow the manufacturer's instructions and labels on the ladder. To determine the correct ladder, consider your weight plus the weight of your load. Do not exceed the load rating and always include the weight of all tools, materials and equipment.

Type	Duty Rating	Use	Load
1AA	Special Duty	Rugged	375 lbs.
1	Heavy Duty	Industrial	250 lbs.
III	Light Duty	Household	200 lbs.

Source for Types IA, I, II, III: Subpart X—Stairways and Ladders, Appendix A (American National Standards Institute (ANSI) 14.1, 14.2, 14.5 (1982)) of OSHA's Construction standards. Source for Type IAA: ANSI 14.1, 14.2, 14.5 (2009), which are non-mandatory guidelines.

TRAIN Workers to Use Stepladders Safely.

Employers must train each worker to recognize and minimize ladder-related hazards.



Common Stepladder Hazards

- Damaged stepladder
- Ladders on slippery or unstable surface
- Unlocked ladder spreaders
- Standing on the top step or top cap
- Loading ladder beyond rated load
- Ladders in high-traffic location
- Reaching outside ladder side rails
- Ladders in close proximity to electrical wiring/equipment

Safe Stepladder Use—DO:

Read and follow all the manufacturer's instructions and labels on the ladder.

- Look for overhead power lines before handling or climbing a ladder.
- Maintain a 3-point contact (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand) when climbing/descending a ladder.
- Stay near the middle of the ladder and face the ladder while climbing up/down.
- Use a barricade to keep traffic away from the ladder.

- Keep ladders free of any slippery materials.
- Only put ladders on a stable and level surface that is not slippery.

Safe Stepladder Use—DO NOT:

- Use ladders for a purpose other than that for which they were designed. For example, do not use a folded stepladder as a single ladder.
- Use a stepladder with spreaders unlocked.
- Use the top step or cap as a step.
- Place a ladder on boxes, barrels or other unstable bases.
- Move or shift a ladder with a person or equipment on the ladder.
- Use cross bracing on the rear of stepladders for climbing.
- Paint a ladder with opaque coatings.
- Use a damaged ladder.
- Leave tools/materials/equipment on stepladder.
- Use a stepladder horizontally like a platform.
- Use a metal stepladder near power lines or electrical equipment.

How to Contact OSHA

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA's role is to help ensure these conditions for America's workers by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education, and assistance. For more information, visit www.osha.gov or call OSHA at 1-800-321-OSHA (6742), TTY 1-877-889-5627.

Additional Resources

OSHA standard: 29 CFR 1926 Subpart X – Ladders

American National Standards Institute standard: ANSI A3.1 – Ladder Safety Requirements
This ANSI standard is intended to be used as a guide to OSHA standards.

OSHA eTool: Ladder Safety
www.osha-slc.gov/eTool/eTool.asp?ID=10

State plan guidance:

www.osha.gov/dcsp/osp/statesstandards.html

www.osha.gov/contactus/bystate

This is one in a series of informational fact sheets highlighting OSHA programs, policies or standards. It does not impose any new compliance requirements. For a comprehensive list of compliance requirements of OSHA standards or regulations, refer to Title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations. This information will be made available to sensory-impaired individuals upon request. The voice phone is (202) 693-1999; teletypewriter (TTY) number: (877) 889-5627.



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