

Ladders and Stairs – An Overview

Overview Of Topic

Ladders are indispensable for many jobs, and most people think more about the task to be done than the ladder that will get them there. Similarly, stairs are also taken for granted. Employees who are aware of ladder and stairway safety are less likely to get hurt.

The main hazard involved with ladder use is falls. A fall can be the result when a ladder fails due to overloading, misuse, or damage. Employees can slip or lose their balance while on the ladder or if they try to reach too far while working at the top of the ladder.

Falls on stairways result when employees slip or trip. Clutter, slippery surfaces, stair or hand rail damage, poor lighting, and unsafe work practices can contribute to stairway fall hazards.

Ladder safety

A few precautions for safe ladder use include the following:

- inspect the ladder for defects before you use it.
- select a ladder with adequate length and load limits.
- do not use metal ladders near electrical lines.
- don't tie ladders together to make them longer.
- set the ladder on a firm, solid surface.
- hoist tools and materials up after reaching the working height. Wear tool belts to help manage hand tools.
- work within the side rails. If the belt buckle goes outside of the side rails, the employee is reaching too far.

Some examples of ladder inspection points:

- follow the manufacturer's inspection guidelines.
- inspect for broken or missing rungs or steps.
- look for broken or split side rails.
- check for corrosion, tight fit between steps and side rails, and rungs that are free from grease or oil and splinters.

Stairway safety

Here are a few rules for stairway safety.

- Eliminate any slippery conditions on stairways. Clean up spills, and keep them free of snow and ice.
- Keep stairways free of debris and clutter, and have proper lighting.
- Use handrails, and keep them in good repair.
- Do not engage in horseplay when on or near stairways.

Employee Training

The general industry standards include requirements for safe use — they do not have specific training requirements for ladders and stairs. A good way to ensure that the safe use requirements are being met is to provide training for employees.

Training Tips

Review 1910, Subpart D—Walking-working surfaces.

Review with the employees the precautions of safe ladder use.

In an areas with adequate room, set up the types of ladders used in the workplace.

Demonstrate the process for doing a visual inspection of the ladder.

Explain proper housekeeping regarding stairways. Explain the need for proper employee behavior where stairways are involved