

A Safety Guide to LADDERS

Before using the ladder

- Is the ladder the safest practical means of access for the task (can the task be done in a safer way?)
- Is the ladder appropriate for the task? (Is a step ladder, platform ladder or straight ladder safest?)
- Is the ladder long enough? (Will my feet be able to stay 3 rungs from top?)
- Is the ladder in good condition; are all components of the ladder secure and working properly?
- Are the rungs free of grease or oil?
- Do I need a second person to assist in setting up the ladder, holding it secure, or passing up items?
- Will the weight of me and my tools exceed the load limit of the ladder? (usually 120kg)

Carrying the ladder

- Carry single or extension ladders parallel to the ground and hold the side rail in the middle of the ladder to balance the load.
- Get help to carry very long or heavy ladders.
- Carry step ladders in the closed position.

Setting up the ladder

- Ladder must be placed on firm, non-slippery footing with weight evenly on both/all ladder feet.
- Never place anything underneath the feet of the ladder to increase its height or make it even, except for a purpose-built ladder leveller.
- Foot of ladder must be blocked, secured or held by a second worker when in use.
- Set up barriers if the ladder will be used in a passageway or doorway.
- Straight ladders must be placed at an angle of 4:1 (75°-80°).
- Extension ladders must have their upper and lower sections overlapped by at least two rungs length to provide stability.
- Step ladders opened fully and ladder locks, spreaders or braces engaged before climbing.
- Use two or more people when setting up or using a straight or extension ladder.

Using the ladder

- Wear enclosed footwear with good gripping soles.
- Face the ladder when ascending and descending.
- Maintain three points of contact at all times when climbing.
- Only one person on the ladder at a time.
- Carry tools in a belt or pouch, place on a tool-holder attached to the ladder, or have an assistant pass them to you.
- Grasp the rungs with your hands rather than the side rails.
- Do not stand above the third rung from the top of the ladder. Keep feet below the point at which the ladder touches the wall or vertical support.
- For a straight or extension ladder, tie the ladder off when you reach the top.
- Only reach sideways to arm's length: the centre of your body should never be further than the side rail.

