

# STEP LADDERS

## IDENTIFY

The correct type of ladder needs to be chosen for the work you are doing. Consider the type of work the ladder will be used for, the weight the ladder must carry, and the condition of the ladder. The most common types of portable ladders used today are step and extension.

The step ladder is one of the most familiar things on a construction site. Still, workers get hurt using them. Falls are the biggest risk. Even though you're not very high off the ground, workers have died from falling a short distance and landing the wrong way. Even sprains or strains could mean pain and days off work.

This toolbox talk will help you understand how to use a step ladder correctly.

## COMMUNICATE AND CONTROL

When setting up a step ladder, the following steps should be followed:

- Check the ladder for defects or damage:
  - At the start of your shift.
  - After it has been used somewhere else by other workers.
  - After it has been left in one place for a long time.
- Keep the area at the base of the ladder clear.
- Make sure the spreader arms lock securely in the open position.
- Stand no higher than the third step from the top.
- When standing on the ladder, avoid leaning forward, backward, or to either side.
- Always open the ladder fully before using it. Don't use an unopened step ladder as a straight or extension ladder. The feet are not designed for this use.
- Never stand on the top step, the top of the ladder, or the pail shelf.
- When climbing up or down a step ladder, always face the ladder to maintain three-point contact.

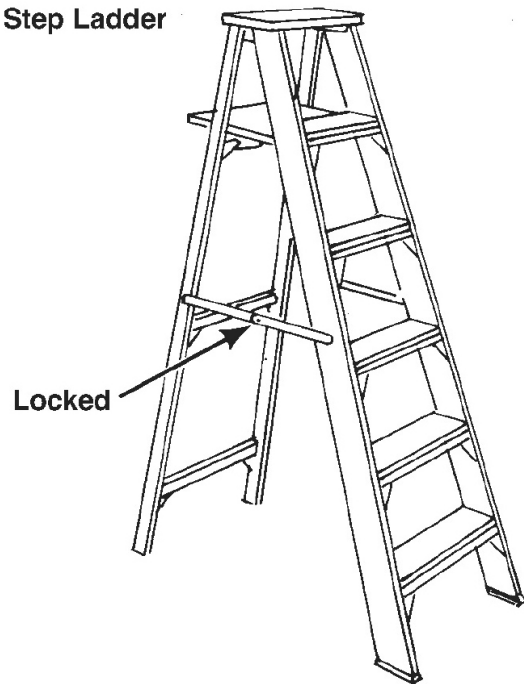
For the requirements and use of step ladders, refer to the Workplace Safety and Health Regulation Part 13.17.

## FACTS AND TIPS

You must develop safe work practices for the use of ladders. The following are some safety practices and dos and don'ts to consider:

- Select a ladder that is appropriate for the task.
- Inspect the ladder before each use.
- Place the ladder on a firm surface.
- Make sure the ladder is level and secure.
- Face the ladder when climbing up or down.
- Keep three points of contact when on a ladder.
- Keep your body within the rails of the ladder when working on it.
- Don't carry tools and materials up a ladder.
- Don't have more than one person on a ladder at the same time.
- Don't use a ladder in high winds.
- Don't stand on the top step of a ladder.
- Don't use a metal or aluminum ladder near electrical power.
- Don't paint a wooden ladder.
- Don't use a worn or damaged ladder.

Step Ladder



## FACTS AND TIPS

All ladders should have a legible manufacturer sticker on the side rail. This sticker reviews the manufacturer guidelines for that specific ladder. There should also be stickers on the second from the top, and the top rungs reminding workers to not stand on them. Workers cannot maintain three-point contact when standing that high on a step ladder.

Here is an example:



## THE QUIZ

1. Step ladders can be used leaning against a wall:  
TRUE \_\_\_\_\_ FALSE \_\_\_\_\_
2. Can workers straddle a ladder?  
YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_
3. Which of these are things workers should do while working on a ladder? (Circle all that apply.)
  - a) Maintain three-point contact
  - b) Paint wooden ladders
  - c) Use a ladder with a broken rung
  - d) Only use on level ground
4. Ladders should always be inspected prior to using it:  
TRUE \_\_\_\_\_ FALSE \_\_\_\_\_
5. Which of these are things to NOT do:
  - a) Overreach to the side
  - b) Fully open the spreader arms
  - c) Stand on the top
  - d) All of the above
6. Safe work practices should be developed by the company:  
TRUE \_\_\_\_\_ FALSE \_\_\_\_\_

1. FALSE; 2. NO; 3. a, d; 4. TRUE; 5. a, c; 6. TRUE

ANSWERS: