



## Ladders

There is no ban on the use of ladders in premises and they can offer a practical option for low risk, short duration tasks. Where they are used however, it is essential that basic precautions are taken to ensure that this is done safely. Obviously, the way you manage this needs to be proportionate to your particular circumstances. We appreciate that your premises is not a factory or a building site and is comparatively a low risk environment.

**Note:** The term 'ladder' includes portable ladders (e.g. pole, 'straight', extension, multi-purpose, telescoping and folding ladders) or steps and fixed ladders. It does not include roof ladders, where additional precautions will be required when these are used.

We would ask you to ensure that the use of ladders is properly planned **in advance**.

### Making a start

| Action   | Guidance  |
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| <p>1. Identify circumstances where work at height may require the use of ladders.</p> <p>Also, identify any fixed ladders you may have for access between floors.</p> <p>Make a note of these.</p> | <p>If you have completed formal risk assessments, these should have done this for you.</p> <p>The purpose of these is to check that you have complied with your responsibilities under health and safety law. As such, they should identify when and how this applies to you, including any precautions you will need to take.</p> <p>In most circumstances, your assessments should be recorded, reviewed and updated where you suspect that they are no longer valid.</p> |

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| Action   | Guidance  |
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| <p>2. For the circumstances identified, check their use is justified.</p> <p>Make a note of the reasons for this.</p>  | <p>If you have completed formal risk assessments, these should have done this for you.</p> <p>Where practicable, it is better to avoid working at height (e.g. completing the work from ground level using extendable tools). However, where you intend to use ladders you should show that this is acceptable. Normally, this would be because of the low risk associated with the work and the short duration of their use or there are existing features at your premises that cannot be altered.</p> <p>As a guide, 'short duration' means having to stay up the ladder for less than 30 minutes at a time. This is not the only factor you will need to consider, as ladders must only be used where they will be level, stable and properly secured.</p> <p>Fixed ladders used for access between floors should only be used where a conventional staircase cannot be accommodated and those required to use them are capable of doing so whilst carrying loads safely.</p>   |
| <p>3. Check the precautions you have taken are adequate. If they are not, identify any additional ones that are needed.</p> <p>Make a note of the precautions in place and/or any additional ones that might be required.</p> <p>Also, note who will be responsible for taking them.</p> | <p>Again, where you have completed formal risk assessments, these will do this for you.</p> <p>For portable ladders, precautions will include those required to ensure proper:</p> <p><b>Selection</b> – any ladder must be the right type for the job and suitable (i.e. strong and robust enough) for its intended use. They should comply with relevant standards (usually BS 2037 or BS EN 131). Where it is not new, only equipment which has been adequately inspected and properly maintained should be used.</p> <p><b>Use</b> – any ladder needs to be in a safe condition, having no visible defects. This may involve checking them before use and regularly thereafter. Users will also need to take precautions, including those necessary to prevent overreaching or overloading through to ensuring that the equipment is properly positioned, footed and/or secured. Ladders and associated equipment needs to be adequately stored when not in use.</p> <p><b>Maintenance</b> – ladders must be properly maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Unauthorised alterations of the equipment should be prohibited with defects being reported and repaired promptly.</p> <p>Fixed ladders need to meet specific safety requirements and you should check to ensure that this is the case.</p> |

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| <p>4. Ensure that the precautions you have identified are taken and remain in place for as long as is necessary.</p> <p>Make a note of any checks or inspections you make to ensure these precautions are being taken or equipment remains safe.</p>           | <p>Where portable ladders are used, you may also need other precautions to guard against falling materials or objects; prevent unauthorised access to work areas; provide adequate lighting; ensure safety around overhead services and/or equipment etc.</p> <p>Ensure that pre-use checks are completed by those using the ladder. They should be provided with information and training on how to do this. Also ensure that regular, detailed visual inspections of the equipment are carried out in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions – these must be completed by a competent person and recorded by them.</p>                                       |
| <p>5. Ensure that ladders will not be used when weather conditions make this unsafe.</p>   |   |
| <p>6. Ensure that employees and volunteers know how to use the ladders safely.</p> <p>Make a note of any information or training that is provided to individuals.</p>  | <p>The level of information and training required will vary depending on the nature of the work and your particular circumstances. If you have completed formal risk assessments, these will help you determine what is necessary.</p> <p>For most premises, tasks are usually low-risk. Here, making sure employees and volunteers receive simple instruction on how to use the equipment safely would be sufficient. In many cases, an understanding of the user instructions affixed to the equipment would be enough.</p> <p>All persons required to inspect, repair and maintain equipment should be provided with appropriate training and information.</p>       |
| <p>7. Document your arrangements and responsibilities for using ladders.</p> <p>Review these where necessary, particularly if you suspect that they are no longer valid.</p> <p>Retain records of the notes you have made in steps 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 above.</p> | <p>If you have prepared a health and safety policy, record these as part of it.</p> <p>In the event of a claim, paperwork will be important. So, where ladders are used, you should retain the records mentioned. Where you prepare other documentation you should keep these as well. This could include <b>information gathered at the scene of the accident</b> (e.g. sketches/photographs; witnesses statements); <b>investigation documents</b> (e.g. accident book); or <b>specific health and safety documents</b> (e.g. risk assessments; records of maintenance, inspections and other checks; records of information and training provided; policy etc.).</p> |

## Want to know more?

Where you have employees, including volunteers, you are required to **comply with health and safety law**. Where this is the case, you will need to understand any specific regulations or guidance that may apply in your particular circumstances. For the safe use of ladders, the key references are:

- Safe use of ladders and stepladders, A brief guide, INDG 455, HSE, available at [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg455.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg455.pdf)

Further useful resources are available at [www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/index.htm)

## Risk advice line

(provided by Ecclesiastical professionals or external specialists)

Phone: **0345 600 7531**

Email: [risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com](mailto:risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com)

Risk specialists are on hand to advise you on a range of topics, including:

- property protection, security, business continuity planning
- health and safety, food safety, environmental management
- construction safety, fire safety, occupational health, water safety or asbestos.

Available Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm (excluding public and bank holidays).

For further information speak to your insurance advisor or call us on **0345 60 20 999**

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