

Much of our work involves equipment deliberately put out of reach. We therefore need to use access equipment (steps, ladders, towers, and scaffolding) to get at it.

More accidents occur involving ladders than any other piece of work equipment. This is because there are so many of them, not because they are particularly dangerous.

A few easily memorized rules can ensure ladder safety. The use of ladders is covered by the Construction (Working Places) Regulations (Construction Sites) and by the Work Equipment Regulations (Everywhere else).

Ladder Rules

1. Only use ladders for work of short duration and which can safely be done from a ladder e.g. work requiring only one hand and within easy reaching distance.
2. Ladders must be of sound material, strong enough for the purpose and properly maintained. (No splits, warping, decay, damage, etc.). A missing or defective rung condemns a ladder automatically (Reg. 31). Wooden ladders must not be painted. (Reg. 9).
3. Ladders must have a firm footing for each stile and if more than 3m long be secured at the upper end, i.e. be lashed. Where such lashing is not possible, securing at or near the base is necessary. Where securing at neither the top nor bottom is possible, a person must 'foot' the ladder. (Reg. 32).
4. Maximum height to be reached by ladder is 9m unless a resting place can be provided. (Greater heights require a scaffold or tower to ensure 'safe Place of Work').
5. Ladders used for access to a higher level must extend at least 1.06m above the landing place unless other regulation height hand hold is provided. (Reg. 32).
6. Ladders must be placed at a safe angle of approx. 75 degrees. This means; distance from base of ladder to the wall should be $\frac{1}{4}$ height reached by the ladder.
7. Only one person should stand on a ladder at one time, except when a second person is standing on the bottom rung to 'foot' the ladder.
8. When climbing or descending ladders, both hands are needed, so carry tools etc. in a shoulder bag or such like (or hoist them up afterwards).
9. Do not use metal ladders near electrical equipment.
10. Do not use a ladder in a driveway or passageway unless protected by barriers or an assistant is constantly in attendance.

