

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

LADDER SAFETY GUIDELINE

LADDERS ARE NOT WORK PLATFORMS. WORK SHOULD NOT BE DONE FROM A LADDER UNLESS THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO ALTERNATIVE.

If a ladder is to be used, consideration should be given to the following

Task	Yes/No
Does the person have to face away from the ladder when going up/down?	
Is the place where someone stands after alighting from the ladder unsafe in any way?	
Does the ladder show any evidence of faults such as missing, cracked, broken loose or worn or warped parts?	
Will the job involve heavy work or the use of both hands to hold something, therefore not maintaining a 3 point contact?	
Is it too windy?	
Does the task need to be undertaken in wet weather or where the ladder surface is likely to be slippery or become slippery over a time?	
Will the task require someone to work outside the ladder stiles and possibly over-reach, causing the ladder to slip sideways	
Will the job involve work near electricity, such as power lines or live wires?	
Is the ladder too short to allow the person to stand on a rung at least 900mm from the top or stand on or below the second tread below the top plate?	
Are there any other factors present that might increase the risk of a fall from a ladder?	

If the answer is **Yes** to any of the above questions additional measures will need to be put in place to allow the task to be to be done safely, or else the task cannot be done using a ladder, or it may not be able to be done at all.

Examples where using a ladder may be acceptable after completing a risk assessment.

- As a means of getting to and from scaffolding or machinery, equipment or a roof of a shed.
- Inspecting, assessing or undertaking minor maintenance on items or fixtures near eaves or ceiling of a small shed or structure, such as changing a light globe, cleaning or fixing vents, inspecting and undertaking minor maintenance.
- Installing lightweight items or fixtures near the eaves or ceiling or shed such as hooks, nails, ornaments, basic shelving, pot plants, small signs, simple light fittings that do not involve wiring.
- Picking or pruning trees and shrubs, where other measures cannot access the site or be used safely or are clearly not practicable given the length of task and/or other circumstances.
- Cleaning, maintenance or inspection tasks involving work areas where there is limited space for access for other control measures such as inside tanks, vat, cellars, pressure vessels and other confined spaces.

SAFE USE OF LADDERS

Setting Up

- Ladders must be set up on a stable and solid surface and set up in a manner which will prevent the ladder from slipping.

- Slipping can be prevented by;
- Ensuring the ladder has non-slip feet.
- Placing single and extension ladders at a slope of four to one, and setting up stepladders in the fully opened position.
- Securing single and extension ladders at both the top and bottom.

Ladders should not be used as a work platform, unless other means of access are not available or practicable.

Ladders must not be used as part of the construction of a scaffold, including trestle ladder scaffold or ladder-bracket scaffold, other than for the purpose of access and egress.

Safe practices involving the use of a ladder.

- Ensure that the ladder is rated for industrial use, not domestic use
- Ensure the ladder is free from power lines
- Set the ladder up where there is no chance of it being knocked by people or animals. It should be secured against movement and be supported from a firm, level, no-slip surface.
- Always have two hands free to climb up and down.
- Any material to tools (other than those held on a worker's belt) should be transferred to the work area separately.
- Don't use tools that require a high degree of leverage as this may result in overbalancing
- Work within the ladder stiles and not overreach. Overreaching can lead to the ladder tipping sideways and is the main contributor to falls from ladders.
- Use the ladder to exit and access from an area, not as a work station.
- Light duties work not exceeding the load rating of the ladder may generally be undertaken.
- Ladders should be placed at a slope that is steeper than 4 units of height to 1 unit horizontally.
- Always face the ladder while climbing up, or down or working.
- Never stand higher than the second tread below the top plate of any step ladder.
- Never work from a ladder above another person.
- Do not use the ladder in an access way or where it may be hit by a door.
- Do not undertake work requiring restricted vision, welding or metal cutting from a ladder.
- A no-metallic ladder should be used where there are electrical hazards.
- Do not allow anyone else to be on the ladder at the same time (the exceptions Emergency Services personnel in certain circumstances).
- Ensure that there is a safe place to stand when alighting from the ladder.

Ladder Maintenance

A ladder needs to be regularly inspected to make sure that it does not pose a risk in itself. Any faults should be replaced or repaired.

REFERENCES:

Falls prevention in the Agriculture Sector. 1st Edition.

This guideline was endorsed by the Executive OHS Committee 5 March 2007.