

HEALTH & SAFETY BULLETIN

191

Ladders

Following recent new regulations on working at heights, the guidance on working on ladders had changed. The following rules should be followed at all times.

Please pass this information to anyone who is likely to work at height, in particular,

- **Caretakers,**
- **Any employee who ever climbs a ladder or step ladder, or ever needs to reach materials on high shelves**

First, there are some general rules

You must always	You must never
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about the task. Is it necessary to work at height at all? Could working at height be avoided? (for example, using a different tool for cleaning windows or gutters). A risk assessment must be carried out. • Make sure the equipment you use is safe and suitable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand on a chair, table, desk or similar furniture to reach something at height, • Use a ladder if it is damaged, or you don't know it is safe, • Use a ladder if you have not been instructed on how to use it safely.

Whether you are using a step ladder or a leaning ladder to gain access to something at height, follow these guidelines.

- The feet must be firmly attached with clean treads,
- All the rungs must be clean and undamaged,
- The stiles (the upright parts) must be straight and undamaged,
- All fastenings must be secure,
- They must stand on a surface that is firm, level, clear, dry and not slippery
- Only work on a ladder for a maximum of 15 - 30 minutes at a time

- Only carry light materials and tools (up to 10 kg)
- Always grip the ladder when climbing
- Do not overreach – make sure your belt buckle (navel) stays within the stiles (the upright parts of the ladder)
- Keep both feet on the same rung or step throughout the task
- Do not work off the top three rungs – this provides a handhold,
- Try to keep three points of contact with the ladder

For a **leaning ladder**, make sure that it:

- Is at an angle of 75° from the vertical – one unit out for every four units up,
- Will not move at the top or bottom; ideally, the ladder should be secured while in use, at very least, get someone to foot the ladder.
- Rests on a strong upper resting point (not plastic guttering or a window)
- Has horizontal rungs (use a spirit level)

For a **step-ladder**, make sure that:

- It is fully open and locked into position,
- It will not move at the bottom, and
- Avoid side-on working (you should be facing the area of work once up the ladder, not side-on to it)

If you are not sure that it is right to use a ladder speak to your line manager or contact the Health and Safety Unit.

Further guidance on using ladders and assessing the risks of work at heights:

Corporate Health and Safety Policy part C section 10,
Children's Service Local Code of Practice (LCOP) 16
LCOP 25, risk assessments for schools, section C 5 (page 38)
www.hse.gov.uk

Training in ladder use

Any person who needs to use a step ladder or leaning ladder as part of their job should be trained in how to use a ladder safely. This training includes essential information on checking ladders and deciding if ladders are suitable for a job and location. If a person has not attended ladder training, someone who has been trained should be found to carry out the task.

Training is available via the Education Department's Development and Consultancy Unit on 020 8359 6341 or 6306.