

Task Method Statement

Description of Task	Safe use of ladders and stepladders
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Reference Number	TMS/02	Rev No	1.0
Date	01.02.2023	Review	12 months

Operator Competency Requirements	EN131 standard for portable steps and ladders
Guidance Used	Work at Height Regulations

1. Hazards Identified / Control Measures

The following hazards have been identified by carrying out a risk assessment of the task to be undertaken:

- Falls from height
- Contact with falling items
- Musculoskeletal damage
- Slips trips & falls

Control measures

- Ladders & stepladders must be of the correct classification: EN131 Professional, (Class 1 ladders can still be used if in good condition)
- All ladders & stepladders must be inspected before each use. Inspections to be documented on a 'laddertag'
- Onsite risk assessment to be undertaken to access local conditions. Be specifically aware of overhead power lines, other objects or obstructions
- Work area to be protected by suitable barriers and warning signs
- Ladders & stepladders are to only be used for short duration work (less than 30 minutes duration) and/or where the site-specific risk assessment specifies that there is no practical safer means of access
- Ladders & stepladders not to be used if weather conditions might make it unstable
- Implement hierarchy of securing ladders as stated in method of work, section 2
- Reduce carrying distances to a minimum by unloading/loading equipment as close as possible to the work site
- Ensure good housekeeping at all times

2. Method of Work

When Ladders / Stepladders are Suitable for Use

Ladders and stepladders may be used after all other safer methods of access have been considered (i.e., tower scaffolds).

As a guide ladders/stepladder may be used:

- For short duration work, i.e., in one position for less than 30 minutes
- For 'light work'

- Where a hand hold is available on a ladder or stepladder
- Where a 3-point contact (hands & feet) can be maintained
- Where safer access equipment e.g., mobile tower scaffolds are not suitable
- Where existing workplace features cannot be altered
- Where staff have received the appropriate training

If the control measures stated above cannot be achieved, a specific risk assessment must be undertaken.

Working Environment

As a guide, only use ladders/stepladders:

- On firm ground
- On level ground – refer to the manufacturer’s pictograms on the side of the ladder. Use proprietary levelling devices, not ad-hoc packing such as bricks, blocks, timbers etc
- On clean, solid surfaces (paving slabs, floors etc). These need to be clean (no oil, moss or leaf litter) and free of loose material (sand, packaging materials etc) so the feet can grip. Shiny floor surfaces can be slippery even without contamination
- Where they will not be struck by vehicles (protect the area using suitable barriers or cones)
- Where they will not be pushed over by other hazards such as doors or windows, i.e., secure the doors (not fire exits) and windows where possible
- Where the general public are prevented from using it, walking underneath it or being at risk because they are too near (use barriers, cones or, as a last resort, a person standing guard at the base)
- Where it has been secured

Ladder & Stepladder Pre-use Inspection

Before undertaking work on a ladder or stepladder, pre use checks should be carried out by the user:

- Before each use
- After something has changed (i.e., after a ladder has been dropped or moved from a dirty area to a clean one)

Pre use checks should check that:

Check the stiles – make sure they are not bent or damaged, as the ladder could buckle or collapse.

Check the feet – if they are missing, worn or damaged the ladder could slip. Also check ladder feet when moving from soft/dirty ground (e.g., dug soil, loose sand/stone, a dirty workshop) to a smooth, solid surface (e.g., paving slabs), to make sure the foot material and not the dirt (e.g., soil, chippings or embedded stones) is making contact with the ground.

Check the rungs – if they are bent, worn, missing or loose the ladder could fail

Check any locking mechanisms – if they are bent or the fixings are worn or damaged the ladder could collapse. Ensure any locking bars are engaged

Check the stepladder platform – if it is split or buckled the ladder could become unstable or collapse

Check the steps or treads on stepladders – if they are contaminated, they could be slippery; if the fixings are loose on steps, they could collapse. If you spot any of the above defects, don't use the ladder and notify the Site Manager.

3. Personal Protective Equipment

Mandatory:

- Safety boots to BS EN ISO 20346
- High visibility vest to BS EN 471
- Safety helmet to BS EN 397

