

Safe use of ladders

Purpose:

To promote the safe use of ladders and ensure proper precautions are taken when using ladders.

Why:

To reduce the risk of serious injury when using ladders.

TIAH Capability Framework area:

This aligns with the knowledge and skills in the Health and Safety area.

<https://tiah.org/tiah-capability-framework>

Talk leader instructions:

- Prepare to do the talk in a suitable/quiet location with no distractions
- Consider using some of the resources as part of the talk, e.g., showing a video
- Engage with participants, ask questions, and give everyday examples
- Conclude with a brief review
- Get everyone to sign the form. Make sure to write the name of the farm and the date. Keep a copy in your Health and Safety records
- Ensure all participants have access to a copy of this document to refer to once the session has finished. This could be electronic and emailed or printed

Background

"A broken ladder can be replaced. You can't"

Falls from height (including falls from ladders) are one of the most common causes of injury or fatality in the UK.

If, after doing a simple risk assessment, you decide to use a ladder (the risk assessment shows that using other equipment offering a higher level of fall protection isn't justified), then there are simple, sensible precautions you can take to stay safe when using ladders in the workplace.

Main learning points



Ladder safety has its ups and downs...

- Ladders can be a practical option for **low-risk tasks that aren't going to take long (under 30 minutes)**. Use an alternative if the task is going to take longer or if an alternative is more suitable for the task. Also, if a 5 min task is routinely carried out 2 or 3 times per week, then there may be other more suitable solutions/equipment
- **Choose the right ladder for the job.** For example, if you're using a ladder to access another level, an extension ladder should be used instead of a stepladder
- **Always carry out a 'pre-use' check to spot any obvious visual defects to make sure the ladder is safe to use.** Look for bent or broken rungs and any dirt or grime on the rungs. Check for bent or broken stiles, and check the tread, locks, and platform and if there are missing or damaged feet. Damaged or defective ladders should be repaired or replaced before use. Don't use a damaged ladder

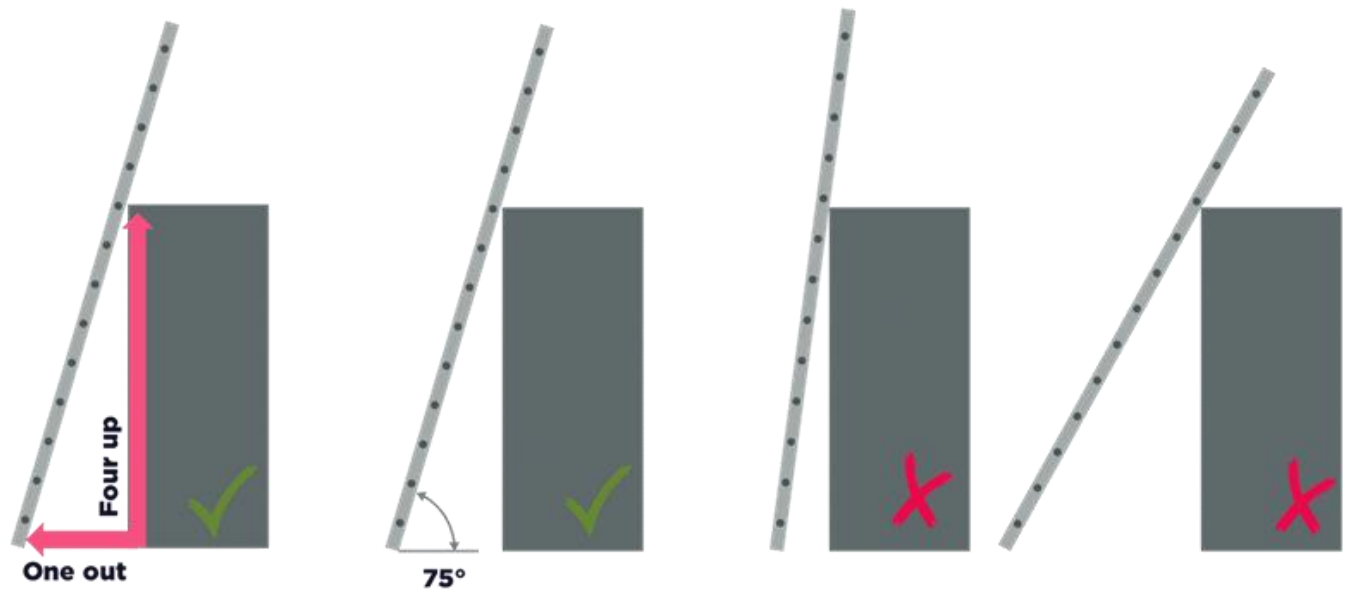


- **Set up the ladder according to manufacturer instructions.** Be mindful of pinch points, and make sure the ladder is set up on **firm and level ground**. Ensure the feet are lying flat on the ground. If needed, tie the ladder off to prevent tipping
- Maintain three points of contact when climbing up and down the ladder and wherever possible when you're working up the ladder.

Notes:

Notes:

- If you're using ladders leaning against a wall, make sure they're at the correct angle by using the one-to-four rule. This means that for every four metres of height you need to climb, place the base of the ladder one metre away from the wall the ladder is leaning against. Or position the ladder at a 75-degree angle



- When climbing up or down, always take your time, face the ladder, maintain **3 points of contact**, and keep your body between the vertical rails. Never work from the three top rungs of any ladder, and DON'T carry tools or equipment in your hands when climbing up or down any ladder



Know how to use a ladder safely

Before using a ladder, make sure you've received some training that covers:

- How to assess the risks of using a ladder for a particular task
- When it's right to use a ladder (and when it's not)
- Which type of ladder to use and how to use it

Discussion points



Q. When should pre-checks be done?

- before you start a task using the ladder
- after something has changed, e.g., a ladder has been dropped or moved from a dirty area to a clean area (check the state or condition of the feet)

Q. What shouldn't you do when using a ladder?

Responses might include:

- Use the wrong step height for the job
- Stand on the top handrail
- Use the top three rungs of a leaning ladder
- Wearing incorrect footwear
- Face backward from the ladder when you're on it
- Overreaching
- Not holding on - ensure you have three points of contact
- Be overloaded with materials/equipment

Q. What situations should you avoid when using a ladder?

Responses might include:

- The ground isn't level or firm, or the ground is slippery
- The surface the ladder will lean against isn't solid
- The ladder can't be safely positioned, e.g., opening doors or windows could push it open, or vehicles could bump into it
- If the general public haven't been excluded from the area
- If the surface it leans against is fragile
- It's not long enough for the task
- It can't be positioned at a safe angle

Suggestions/ ideas:

Use ladders when the risk assessment shows that using other equipment offering a higher level of fall protection isn't justified, and the task is quick. Before using the ladder, check for defects. If there's a problem with the ladder, don't use it and let your supervisor/ manager know.

If you're using ladders leaning against a wall, make sure they're at the correct angle by using the one-to-four rule.

When climbing up or down, always take your time, face the ladder, and maintain 3 points of contact.

Resources

HSE: Safe use of ladders and stepladders:
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/ladders/when-how-to-use-ladders-safely.htm>

Free ladder safety poster:
<https://www.safepointapp.com/ladder-safety-poster-form>

Ladder and Stepladder Checklist:
https://www.firstoption.group/files/ladder_checklist.pdf

The Ladder Association:
<https://ladderassociation.org.uk/guidance/inspecting-a-ladder/>

Toolbox Talk participants

Toolbox Talk: **Safe use of ladders**

Name of farmDate

Talk leader name.....

Name	Signature	Date