

# Ladder Safety

The OSHA Standard for portable ladders contains specific requirements designed to ensure worker safety:

## Loads

Self-supporting (foldout) and non-self-supporting (leaning) portable ladders must be able to support at least four times the maximum intended load, except extra-heavy-duty metal or plastic ladders, which must be able to sustain 3.3 times the maximum intended load. (See Figure 1.)



Figure 1

## Angle

Non-self-supporting ladders, which must lean against a wall or other support, are to be positioned at such an angle that the horizontal distance from the top support to the foot of the ladder is about 1/4 the working length of the ladder. (See Figure 2.)

In the case of job-made wooden ladders, that angle should equal about 1/8 the working length. This minimizes the strain of the load on ladder joints that may not be as strong as on commercially manufactured ladders.



Figure 2

## Rungs

Ladder rungs, cleats, or steps must be parallel, level, and uniformly spaced when the ladder is in position for use. Rungs must be spaced between 10 and 14 inches apart.

For extension trestle ladders, the spacing must be 8-18 inches for the base, and 6-12 inches on the extension section.

Rungs must be so shaped that an employee's foot cannot slide off, and must be skid-resistant. (See Figure 3.)



Figure 3

## Slipping

Ladders are to be kept free of oil, grease, wet paint, and other slipping hazards.

Wood ladders must not be coated with any opaque covering, except identification or warning labels on one face of a side rail.

## Other Requirements

Foldout or stepladders must have a metal spreader or locking device to hold the front and back sections in an open position when in use. (See Figure 4.)



Figure 4

When two or more ladders are used to reach a work area, they must be offset with a landing or platform between the ladders.

The area around the top and bottom of ladder must be kept clear.

Ladders must not be tied or fastened together to provide longer sections, unless they are specifically designed for such use. (See Figure 5.)



Figure 5

Never use a ladder for any purpose other than the one for which it was designed.

[1910.25 - Portable wood ladders.](#)

[1910.26 - Portable metal ladders.](#)

[1910.27 - Fixed ladders](#)

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