

# Hanover County Safety & Risk Focus

## Portable Ladders



Portable ladders are a common tool that is relied on by a variety of people both in and out of the workplace to effectively and quickly access elevated work that ranges from the complex (maintenance & construction) to the mundane (replacing a light bulb in a light fixture). While portable ladders are a great tool that most all of us would never want to be without, if they are not used correctly, portable ladders pose a significant threat to a user's safety.

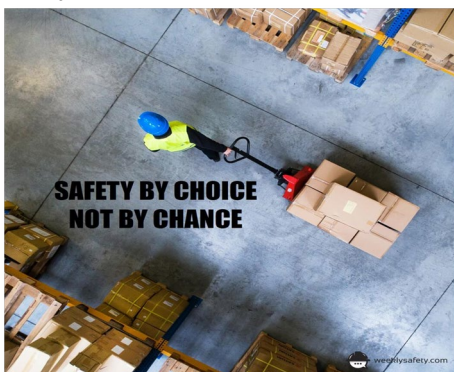
Falls from portable ladders (step, straight, combination and extension) are one of the leading causes of occupational fatalities and injuries. The numbers speak for themselves. Each year, over 500,000 people are treated for ladder related falls. Falls from ladders also result in at least 300 deaths a year. Costs related to falls from ladders or otherwise, are estimated to result in \$2.4B in related accident costs annually. The impact from falls is not exclusive to how high you are off the ground. In most cases, falls from ladders resulting in serious injury occur at heights of 4' or less!

Bearing these statistics in mind, following these safe ladder practices will set you up for success:

- If a ladder is needed for the task and it is not immediately available, stop the task and obtain the proper ladder for the job. **Do not use chairs, desktops, tables or other improvised access methods for accessing elevated work.**
- Read and follow all labels/markings on the ladder.
- Avoid electrical hazards! – Look for overhead power lines before handling a ladder. Avoid using a metal ladder near power lines or exposed energized electrical equipment.
- Always inspect the ladder prior to using it. If the ladder is damaged, it must be removed from service and tagged until repaired or discarded.
- Always maintain a 3-point (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand) contact on the ladder when climbing. Keep your body near the middle of the step and always face the ladder while climbing. **Do not overreach!**
- Only use ladders and appropriate accessories (ladder levelers, jacks or hooks) for their designed purposes.
- Ladders must be free of any slippery material on the rungs, steps or feet.
- Do not use a self-supporting ladder (e.g., step ladder) as a single ladder or in a partially closed position.
- Do not use the top step/rung of a ladder as a step/rung unless it was designed for that purpose.
- Use a ladder only on a stable and level surface, unless it has been secured (top or bottom) to prevent displacement.
- Do not place a ladder on boxes, barrels or other unstable bases to obtain additional height.
- Do not move or shift a ladder while a person or equipment is on the ladder.
- An extension or straight ladder used to access an elevated surface must extend at least 3' above the point of support. Do not stand on the three top rungs of a straight, single or extension ladder.
- The proper angle for setting up a ladder is to place its base a quarter of the working length of the ladder from the wall or other vertical surface
- A ladder placed in any location where it can be displaced by other work activities must be secured to prevent displacement or a barricade must be erected to keep traffic away from the ladder.
- Be sure that all locks on an extension ladder are properly engaged.
- Do not exceed the maximum load rating of a ladder. Be aware of the ladder's load rating and of the weight it is supporting, including the weight of any tools or equipment.

**Don't risk a fall, Use ladders properly!!**

### Safety & Risk Quote of the Month:



### Safety & Risk Resources

Below are some additional resources for review & use around the topic of Portable Ladder Safety:

- [American Ladder Institute – National Ladder Safety Month](#)
- [American Ladder Institute – Ladder Safety Resources & free training](#)
- [American Ladder Institute – Ladder Safety Videos \(Short Subject\)](#)

Ladder inspection & assessment:

- [Portable Ladder Safety Checklist](#)