

HEALTH SAFETY & WELLBEING ALERT

Ladder Selection & Use

WHAT IS THE RISK?

Incorrect ladder selection or use can lead to:

- Falls from height due to ladder collapse
- Musculoskeletal injuries from overreaching or lifting heavy and/or bulky items.
- Slips and trips due to wet or uneven surfaces
- Electric shock if the ladder is conductive whilst doing electrical work

WHAT CAN WE DO TO STAY SAFE?

Should a ladder be used?

- The use of ladders should be **eliminated** where possible by bringing tasks or storing items at a height that can be reached from ground/floor level. Heavy items should be stored at waist level to minimise lifting.
- Consider alternatives such as scaffolding or elevated work platforms (EWPs) for high-risk tasks.
- Ladders should be used only for simple, short-duration tasks e.g. occasionally accessing top shelves.
- Avoid ladder use near machinery or moving equipment.

Choosing a Ladder?

- Choose industrial-rated ladders that comply with **Australian Standard 1892.1** with a minimum load rating of **120kg**.
- Preference should be given to using a step platform ladder (Figure 2).
- In laboratories and workshops, ensure ladders are resistant to chemicals and that floors are clean and dry to prevent slips.
- Fiberglass ladders must be used for any electrical related work.
- Consider using a step stool for low height, low-risk frequent access such as storage areas (Figure 1).

Inspection and Maintenance

- Inspect ladders and step stools **before each use** for damage, wear, or defects.
- Avoid using ladders or stools with cracks, broken rungs, or loose components.
- Ensure the all moving parts operate freely and that treads are non-slip.
- Ensure that manufacturer's safety labels and designated safe weight limit (SWL) are legible.
- Where fitted, ensure castor wheels are intact and spin freely.

Ladder Setup

- Place ladders on stable, level ground and ensure spreaders/locks are fully engaged.
- Extension ladders should be:
 - positioned at a 4:1 angle (one meter out for every four meters in height) and extend at least one meter above the landing point.
 - secured at the top using a ladder anchor point and adequately footed at the base.
- Avoid setting up ladders near doorways or in high-traffic areas.
- Ensure adequate barricading and signage a trafficable area is unavoidable (including pedestrians).

Using a Ladder




- Ensure appropriate footwear is worn.
- Maintain three points of contact with the ladder (two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand).
- Face the ladder when climbing and descending.
- Avoid overreaching; reposition the ladder instead.
- Do not carry items by hand while climbing—use a tool belt or hoist materials separately.
- Do not straddle the ladder.

Using a Step Stool

- Choose step stools with non-slip surfaces, sufficiently wide to comfortably place both feet on the platform.
- Ensure they are rated for industrial use i.e. minimum 120 kg.
- Position step stools on flat, dry surfaces to prevent tipping.

Storage

- Store ladders and step stools in dry, shaded areas to prevent UV degradation.

Figure 1: Step Stool	Figure 2: Step Platform Ladders	Figure 3: A-Frame Ladder
		

More Information: Monash Health Safety & Wellbeing Team hsw@monash.edu

Useful links: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/using-portable-ladders-workplace>