

No Falls Week – Toolbox Talk

No Falls Week is an important industry-wide campaign focused on raising awareness of the dangers of working at height and preventing falls in the workplace. Falls from height remain one of the leading causes of serious injuries and fatalities across construction, maintenance, roofing, and industrial environments. This week is a reminder that every task involving work at height must be properly planned, supervised, and carried out using the correct equipment and safe systems of work.

Before starting any job at height, workers must ensure that ladders, scaffolds, mobile towers, MEWPs, harnesses, and other access equipment have been inspected and are suitable for the task. Always maintain good housekeeping to prevent slips and trips, secure tools and materials to avoid falling objects, and never take shortcuts or bypass safety controls. Edge protection, guardrails, and fall arrest systems must always be used where required. If weather conditions, damaged equipment, or unsafe conditions create additional risks, work should stop until it is safe to continue.

Everyone on site has a responsibility to look after themselves and their colleagues. Speak up if something does not look safe, report defects immediately, and follow site rules and risk assessments at all times. Remember — no task is so urgent that it cannot be done safely. Preventing falls starts with good planning, proper equipment, and the right attitude toward safety every day.

HOW TO... SELECT THE RIGHT LADDER

What is the risk?

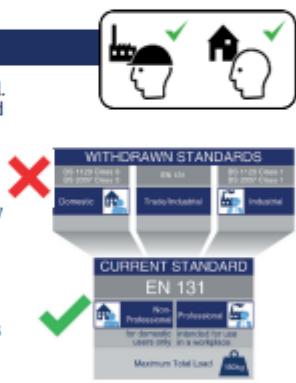
Ladders can be a sensible and practical option for low risk and short duration tasks, but they shouldn't automatically be your first choice. If it's right to use a ladder, make sure you choose the right ladder. Ladders come in all shapes and sizes - it's down to you to find the most suitable one for each task.

What type of ladder should you choose?

- There are various types of ladders available on the market. Most common are Leaning Ladders, Stepladders, Step Stools, Combination Ladders, Multi Hinge Joint Ladders, Telescopic Ladders, Mobile Ladders with a Platform and Roof Ladders.
- Consider the task you are carrying out to determine the most appropriate type of ladder to use, as certain types of ladders may be more suitable for your task.
- Ask the manufacturer for help if you're unsure.

Select the right class

- There are two classes of ladder; Professional and Non-Professional.
- Only use 'Professional' ladders at work - they are more durable and are designed to withstand more demanding conditions. Look out for the 'Professional' symbol on the ladder label (see above). Never use 'Non-Professional' or 'Class 3' ladders at work, they are designed only to be used at home.
- To stay safe, use a ladder that meets current standard EN 131 - they are wider, stronger and sturdier. Only buy from a reputable source, as cheaper ladders sold online may be falsely claiming to be compliant and could be unsafe to use.
- If your ladder was compliant with withdrawn standards BS 2037 and BS 1129 (often referred to as Class 1 and Class 3 ladders), you can still use them as long as they are in good condition (pre-use checks and detailed inspections will help you check the ladder is safe to use). When you need to replace them, only buy ladders that meet EN 131.




Select the right material

Ladders are made of materials including aluminium, steel, wood and fibreglass. Each material has properties that make the ladder suitable for some applications and unsuitable for others.

- Aluminium - lightweight, easy to move and position. Do not use near electricity - they are very good conductors of electricity so increases the risk of electrical shock.
- Steel - heavy, more difficult to move around, but very durable.
- Wood & Fibreglass - keep ladders well clear of live electrical equipment, particularly high voltage overhead cables. If the work is unavoidable and you need to use a ladder, use one made of fibreglass or wood, and keep them clean and dry.

Select the right height

- Always choose a ladder long enough for the job - don't over reach and never try to gain extra height by standing on your ladder on bricks, boxes etc.
- Leaning ladders - do not stand on the last 3 rungs.
- Stepladders - never use as a leaning ladder in the closed position. On a stepladder without a platform, do not stand on the top tread or the two treads below. Never stand on a hand or knee rail.
- Combination ladders - on three-part combination ladders in stepladder mode, do not stand on the top four rungs.



5 KEY POINTS:

1. Decide if a ladder is the right solution
2. Use the most appropriate type of ladder for the task
3. Only use 'Professional' ladders at work
4. Make sure your ladder meets current standard
5. Make sure your ladder is long enough

Who needs to know:

- Anyone who uses ladders and stepladders on site
- Managers and site supervisors

Useful references:

- LA455 'Safe Use of Ladders and Stepladders: A brief guide'
- Ladder Association Code of Practice



HOW TO...SELECT THE RIGHT LADDER GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS

How to use this guidance

This additional guidance has been created for Managers, Supervisors, Safety Leads or any person responsible for delivering the Toolbox Talks on site. It is designed to be used alongside the Toolbox Talk and offers additional, more specific information to help you add value to the topic covered. **The Ladder Association Code of Practice serves as a supporting document for users, supervisors and managers who have completed a Ladder Association course, and is not intended to be a substitute for training.**

What is the risk?

Ladders are often the 'go-to' piece of equipment as they are readily available on site. But this availability doesn't mean they are suitable for every task. It is often assumed they are so simple to use, what can go wrong? Ladders *can* be simple for those with the right knowledge - users must understand how to select the right ladder for the task to stay safe and prevent accidents.

What type of ladder should you choose?

- Leaning Ladders - should be Certified to EN 131 Parts 1, 2 and 3. Available as single and multi-section ladders, and two and three section extension ladders.
- Stepladders - should be Certified to EN 131 Parts 1, 2 and 3. Available with or without platforms (without a platform are often referred to as 'builder's steps' or 'swingback steps').
- Step Stools - should be Certified to EN 14183. They are a type of stepladder. Max height 1m and generally have larger treads than stepladders.
- Combination Ladders - should be Certified to EN 131 Parts 1, 2 and 3. A combination ladder can be used in either stepladder or leaning ladder mode. Known as 'multipurpose' or 'A' frame ladders.
- Multi Hinge Joint Ladders - should be Certified to EN 131 Part 4. Normally has one or more pairs of hinge joints and may be used as a stepladder or a leaning ladder.
- Telescopic Ladders - should be Certified to EN 131 Part 6. Telescopic sections reduce size for easier transportation and storage.
- Mobile Ladders with a Platform - should be Certified to EN 131 Part 7. Sometimes called 'warehouse steps', fitted with wheels for movement, larger platform with guardrails for safety.
- Roof Ladders - should be Certified to BS 8634. For use on pitched roofs with angles between 25-65 degrees. Not for use on roofs with a slope only on one side, as the ridge hook can't be properly located.
- See Ladder Association Code of Practice Sections 7 and 10 & Ladder Association 'Safety Guidance on Portable Ladders'.



Select the right class

- Professional and Non-Professional ladders have the same maximum total load of 150kg.
- **The key difference is their durability.** Professional ladders are put through 50,000 load test cycles, compared to 10,000 cycles for Non-Professional. That's 5 times more durability testing to withstand the demanding use on site!
- Pre-use check - just because the ladder was safe to use last time, doesn't mean it's safe to use this time. It could have been damaged in storage, transport or use. A pre-use check should be carried out by the competent user 1) at the beginning of the working day and 2) after something changes i.e. it's dropped, moved between areas, left unattended etc. The pre-use check is visual and functional to quickly establish if the ladder is safe to use NOW. See Ladder Association Code of Practice Section 14.
- Detailed inspections - should be carried out in addition to pre-use checks, again by a competent person, to make sure the ladder is safe for continued use, or identify if it needs repaired. Must be carried out at fixed intervals and recorded. As a guide, ladders used and stored in good conditions should be inspected as follows (at minimum): every 3 months (if in daily use), every 6 months (if used occasionally) and every 12 months (if used infrequently). See Ladder Association Code of Practice Section 26.
- The Ladder Association offers a half day inspection training course - view all courses at ladderassociation.org.uk/training

Useful references:

- LA455 'Safe Use of Ladders and Stepladders: A brief guide' (available to download free from ladderassociation.org.uk)
- Ladder Association Code of Practice (available from ladderassociation.org.uk or via our mobile app)
- Ladder Association 'Safety Guidance on Portable Ladders' EN131

Select the right material & Select the right height

- Know the difference between standing height, maximum length and **safe working height - this is key!**
- See Ladder Association Code of Practice Section 10.