

Toolbox Talk Training: Portable Step Ladders – Safety DO's and DO NOT's

Many common accidents involving portable step ladders can be prevented by following basic ladder safety practices. Keep these important “Do’s and Don’ts” in mind whenever using a portable step ladder.

Safe Practices – DO:

- Inspect the ladder before each use. Check for cracks, loose parts, damaged steps, missing feet, or any other defects. Remove the ladder from service if any condition could affect safe use.
- Set the ladder on a stable surface. Ensure all four ladder feet are firmly positioned on a level, solid surface. Before climbing, confirm that both spreaders are fully opened and locked into place.
- Maintain safe distances from electrical hazards. Keep the ladder, your body, tools, and materials at least 10 feet away from energized electrical lines or equipment. Greater clearances may be required for higher voltages.
- Maintain a secure grip while climbing. Always keep at least one hand firmly holding a ladder side rail or rung when ascending or descending. Simply sliding your hand along the rail does not provide a secure grip.
- Keep your body centered on the ladder. Maintain balance by keeping your belt buckle between the ladder side rails. If you cannot comfortably reach your work area, climb down and reposition the ladder instead of overreaching.

Unsafe Practices – DO NOT:

- Do not use the ladder for unintended purposes. Never lean a folded step ladder against a wall for climbing, and never use a step ladder horizontally as a work platform or bridge.
- Do not use conductive ladders near electricity. Avoid using metal ladders or other conductive materials near energized electrical equipment or power lines.
- Do not carry items that interfere with safe climbing. Never climb a ladder while carrying tools or materials that prevent you from maintaining at least one secure handhold or that could affect your balance.
- Do not store tools or materials on the ladder. Avoid placing tools, equipment, or materials on the ladder top cap or steps where they could fall and injure someone if the ladder moves or is bumped.
- Do not stand on unsafe ladder surfaces. Never stand on the top cap or top step of a standard portable step ladder. Always follow the manufacturer’s instructions and warning labels regarding approved standing levels.

Although these are not the only ladder safety requirements, following these basic practices can significantly reduce the risk of accidents, injuries, and fatalities when using portable step ladders.

Does anyone have questions, comments, or additional safety tips related to portable step ladder use? Thank you for participating in today’s toolbox talk. Please remember to sign the training certification form before leaving so you receive credit for attending today’s training session.

