

Toolbox Talk Training: Storage of Portable Ladders

Portable ladders are exposed to damage not only during use on the jobsite, but also when they are stored improperly. Over time, poor storage conditions can weaken a ladder and make it unsafe to use. Today we'll review simple precautions that help extend the life of portable ladders and keep them safe for future use.

- **Choose a proper storage location away from direct sunlight.** UV rays can break down fiberglass and plastic-reinforced materials, making them weaker over time. Sunlight can also cause plastic components like caps and trays to become brittle, and it can fade safety labels and warning stickers until they are no longer readable.
- **Protect ladders from moisture.** Avoid storing ladders in areas exposed to rain, steam, mist, or high humidity. Moisture can cause wood and plastic ladders to swell, promote mold or mildew growth (creating slippery surfaces), and contribute to rust and corrosion of metal parts and fasteners.
- **Keep ladders away from excessive heat and ignition sources.** Do not store ladders near boilers, furnaces, or other high-heat equipment. Heat can warp, weaken, or damage ladder materials depending on their construction. Also avoid areas where sparks, open flames, or hot work may occur.
- **Avoid high-traffic storage areas.** Do not store ladders near doorways, blind corners, walkways, or equipment travel paths where they could be struck by people, forklifts, carts, or other moving equipment.
- **Store ladders in the correct position.** Step ladders should be fully closed and secured in an upright position so they do not twist or sag. Extension ladders should be stored flat and evenly supported to prevent bending or distortion. Secure ladders when necessary to prevent tipping or falling if they are bumped.
- **Do not misuse stored ladders.** Never use ladders as hooks for tools or equipment, and do not lean materials against them. These practices can cause unnecessary stress, bending, or long-term damage.
- **Watch for overhead hazards.** When selecting a storage location, ensure ladders are not placed near electrical lines or overhead equipment. Someone unfamiliar with the area may later move or carry the ladder and accidentally come into contact with these hazards.

Finally, always follow the manufacturer's instructions and safety guidelines regarding proper ladder storage.

Does anyone have additional suggestions or experiences related to safe ladder storage? Thank you for your attention today. Please remember to sign the training certification form before leaving so you receive credit for attending today's training session.

