

# **Update On Use Of Ladders**

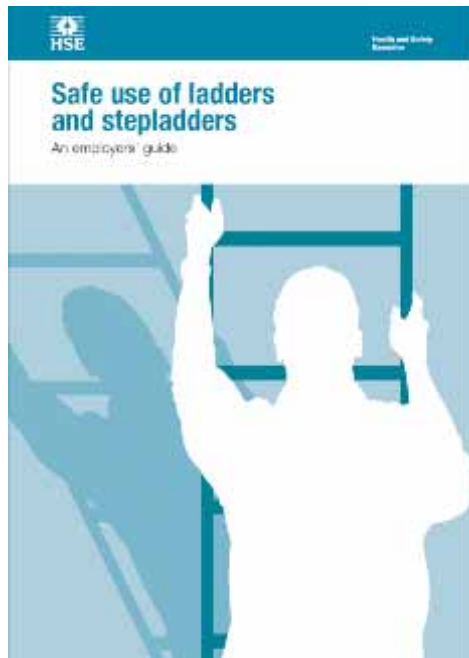
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# Introduction

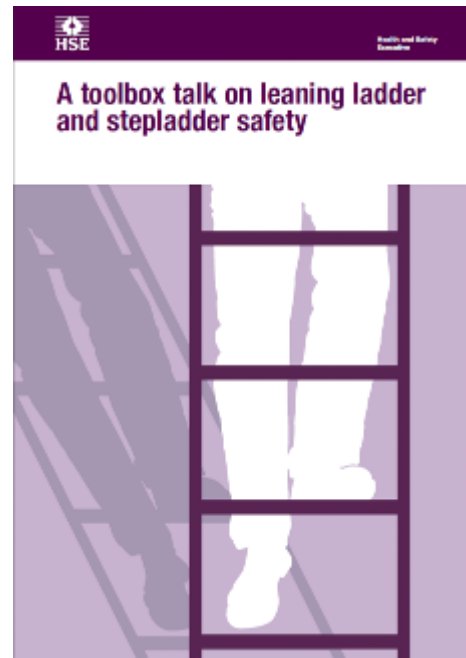
- Overview
- Main Differences
- Selection of Equipment
- Short Duration
- Ladder Inspection
- Safe Use – Leaning Ladders
- Safe Use – Stepladders
- Securing Ladders
- Access Ladders
- Summary

# Overview



**INDG402**

**Safe Use of  
Ladders and  
Stepladders**



**INDG403**

**A Toolbox Talk on  
Leaning Ladder  
and Stepladder  
Safety**



**INDG405**

**Top Tips for  
Ladder and  
Stepladder  
Safety**

# Overview Continued



 Health and Safety Executive

## Safe use of ladders and stepladders

A brief guide



This is a web-friendly version of leaflet INDG455, published 01/14.

**Ladders and stepladders are not banned under health and safety law. In fact they can be a sensible and practical option for low-risk, short-duration tasks.**

### Introduction

This guidance is for employers on the simple, sensible precautions they should take to help people safe when using ladders and stepladders in the workplace. This will also be useful for employees and their representatives.

Following this guidance is normally enough to comply with the Work at Height Regulations 2005 (WHR). You also have to take other action, except where the guidance says you must do something specific.

Ladders and stepladders are not banned under health and safety law.

In fact they can be a sensible and practical option for low-risk, short-duration tasks, although they may not automatically be your first choice. Make sure you use the right type of ladder and you know how to use it safely.

The law calls for a sensible, proportionate approach to managing risk, and further guidance on what you should do before deciding if a ladder is the right type of equipment for a particular task is provided in Working at Height: A brief guide (see further reading).

References to ladders in this leaflet, unless otherwise indicated, refer to leaning ladders (sometimes known as extension ladders) and stepladders and the guidance applies similarly to both. More specific requirements that only apply to a leaning ladder or a stepladder are covered in detail under the relevant headings.

### When is a ladder the most suitable equipment?

The law says that ladders can be used for work at height when a risk assessment has shown that using equipment offering a higher level of fall protection is not justified because of the low risk and short duration of use, or there are existing workplace features which cannot be altered.

Short duration is not the deciding factor in establishing whether use of a ladder is acceptable or not – you should have first considered the risk. As a guide, if your task would require staying up a leaning ladder or stepladder for more than 30 minutes at a time, it is recommended that you consider alternative equipment.

You should only use ladders in situations where they can be used safely, eg where the ladder will be level and stable, and where it is reasonably practicable to do so, the ladder can be secured.

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**INDG455**

**Safe Use of Ladders and Stepladders**

# Main Differences

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- No significant changes
- Information has been condensed into 7 pages
- Some aspects made clearer
- Some aspects clarified
- Font colour is now green

# When is a Ladder the Most Suitable Equipment?

- Law says: When a risk assessment shows equipment offering a higher level of fall protection is not justified. For example:
  - Low risk AND short duration
  - Unalterable workplace features

# Short Duration

- Task greater than 30 minutes – recommended alternative equipment is considered
- Short Duration is **NOT** the deciding factor for ladder use being acceptable
  - Risk must be considered (Hierarchy of Control)

# Short Duration Continued

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- Ladders only to be used in situations where they can be used safely, for example:
  - Level and stable
  - Reasonably Practicable to do so
  - Secured
  - By competent operators



# Ladder Inspection

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- Pre-use check:
  - By user
  - At beginning of day
  - After something has changed
    - Dropped
    - Moved

# Ladder Inspection Continued

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- What should be checked:
  - Stiles
  - Feet (dirty to clean)
  - Rungs
  - Locking mechanisms
  - Platform (if necessary)
  - Steps / Treads
- Bent, damaged, worn, slippery / contaminated, missing, loose

# Safe Use – Leaning Ladders

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- Only carry light materials and tools
- Don't overreach (stay within the stiles)
- Make sure it is appropriate (high enough etc.)
- Don't overload it

# Safe Use – Leaning Ladders Continued



- 75° (1 horizontal, 4 vertical)
- Grip and face ladder when climbing it
- Don't alter ladders when on them
- Don't stand ladders on moveable objects
- Avoid carrying items when climbing (e.g. tool belt)



Figure 1 Ladder showing the correct 1 in 4 angle (means of securing omitted for clarity)

# Safe Use – Leaning Ladders Continued

- Don't work off top 3 rungs (1m)



**Figure 2** Correct – user maintaining three points of contact (means of securing omitted for clarity)



**Figure 3** Incorrect – overreaching and not maintaining three points of contact (means of securing omitted for clarity)

# Safe Use – Leaning Ladders Continued



- Don't work near overhead power lines (6m) unless controlled
- Secure (tie in) the ladder
- Avoid resting ladders against weak surfaces (e.g. plastic guttering)

# Safe Use – Stepladders

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- Check feet are all level and in contact with ground
- Only carry light materials and tools
- Don't overreach
- Don't work on top 3 steps unless suitable handhold
- Ensure locking devices engaged

# Safe Use – Stepladders Continued



- Work face on – not side on, unless risk assessed (e.g. space restraints prevent engaging locking mechanisms)
- Avoid work that creates side-loading (e.g. side on drilling)
  - Otherwise need to tie or use other equipment



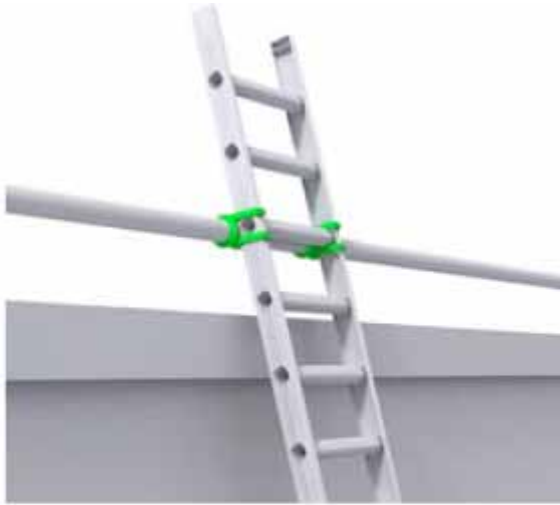
# Safe Use – Stepladders Continued

- Maintain 3 points of contact
- Where 2 hands required:
  - Feet on same step
  - Body (knees or chest) supported by stepladder (to maintain 3 points of contact)
  - Make sure a safe handhold is available

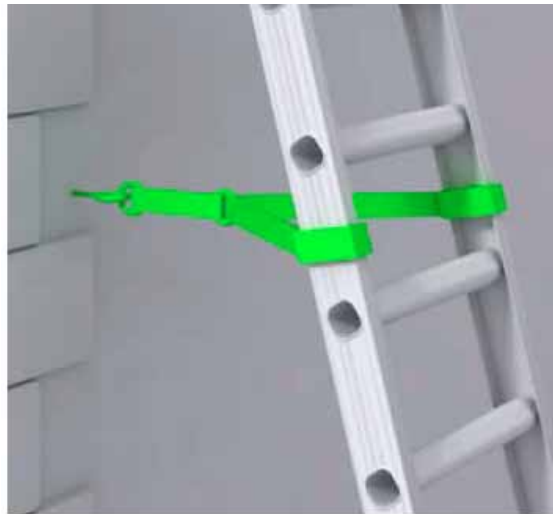


# Securing Ladders

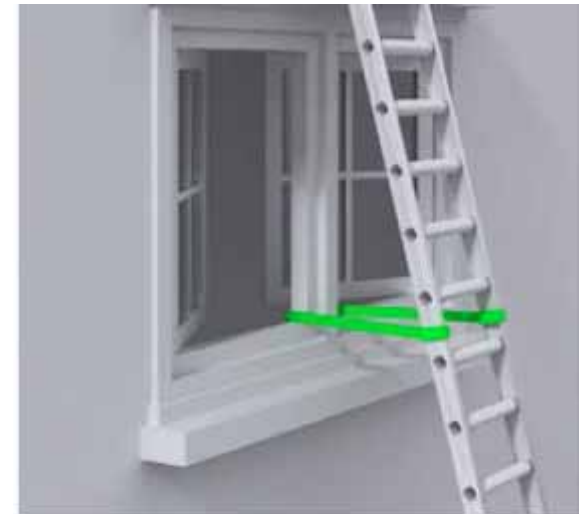
- Tie to a suitable point



**Figure 6** Correct – ladder tied at top stiles (correct for working on, but not for gaining access to a working platform/roof etc)



**Figure 8** Correct – tying near the base



**Figure 7** Correct – tying part way down

# Securing Ladders Continued

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- Where not practical, secure with effective ladder stability device
- Where this is not possible, securely wedge the ladder (e.g. against a wall)
- If none possible, foot ladder (last resort)

# Access Ladders

- Ladders used to access another level:
  - Should be tied
  - Extend at least 1m above landing
  - Self-closing gate is recommended
  - Only use ladders designed as access ladders



**Figure 9** Correct – access ladders should be tied and extend at least 1 m above the landing point to provide a secure handhold

# Ladder Condition

- Ladders need a visual check by a competent person (in addition to pre-use checks)
- Scaffold ladders need to be checked every 7 days
- In accordance with manufacturer's instructions
- Record these checks

# Summary

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- Short duration (30 minutes) does not automatically mean ladders are acceptable to use
- Do pre-use checks and visual inspections
- Use 3 points of contact
- Secure the ladder – footing not automatic
- Use of ladders – justify by Risk Assessment