

DON'T FALL FOR IT!

Fact Sheet #3

Setting Up Portable Ladders

"Your life can just change in one day... completely. I was completely devastated. I was in shock for a long time. I didn't know what to do."

-- Millie Bevans



Millie and Frankie Bevans lost husband/father in a fall on a plumbing job.

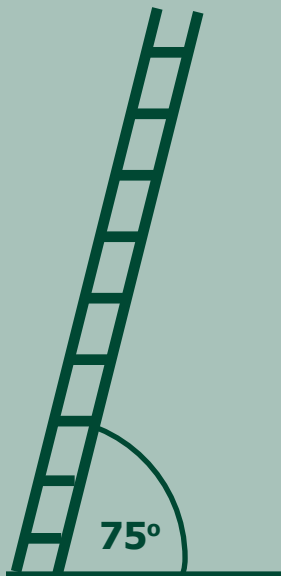


Preventing a fall may start with ladder inspection, but a safe, well-maintained ladder becomes dangerous if it's not set up correctly.

Fixed ladders have already been set in place, but portable ladders — straight ladders, extension ladders, and stepladders — must all be set up properly before you can safely climb them. Just follow the OSHA regulations outlined in the checklist below.

Checklist for setting up a portable ladder:

- Look for a safe location.
- Prepare firm, level footing.
- Set ladder at a 75 degree angle.
- Extend ladder 3 feet above landing.
- Secure ladder at the bottom.
- Secure ladder at the top.
- Keep area clear of hazards and barricade bottom to protect from traffic.



Step-by-Step Setup

OSHA Regulations Made Simple

Safe Location

Position your ladder in the safest location possible. Avoid hazards such as entry and exit doors, vehicular and pedestrian traffic, and uneven flooring or landing points. Don't use a ladder in windy conditions. And always make sure you're at least 10 feet from overhead power lines.

Firm, Level Footing

A ladder needs a solid, level base, so use the "HEEL TEST" to see if the ground is hard enough. Stomp your heel on the ground. If it goes in more than one inch, the ground is too soft for a ladder.

If the ground is not hard enough, you can use a piece of plywood or particle board to make a firm, level base for the ladder. It also provides a place where workers can wipe mud off their feet before climbing.

Other ways you can provide level footing for a ladder include:

- moving the ladder to a level place
- leveling the ground by removing soil
- using a ladder with an adjustable base

Why Level?

A ladder that is not perfectly level at the bottom will become unstable when a worker climbs it.

A 20-foot ladder that is not level by only 3/4-inch at the bottom will be out of plumb 14 inches at the top, causing it to be unstable as the worker reaches the top rung.

If the same 20-foot ladder is not level by 2 inches at the bottom, it would be 40 inches off at the top. Now, the ladder becomes unstable when the worker is only about 5 feet off the ground.

Set Ladder at 75 Degree Angle

To set a ladder at the proper angle, the base should be 1 foot from the wall for every 4 feet in height. This makes a 75 degree angle.

An easy way to estimate this angle is to put your toes at the ladder base and extend your arm. Your hand should just reach the ladder rungs. If the rungs are too close to you, the ladder angle is too steep. If the rungs are too far from you, the ladder angle is too broad.

Extend Ladder 3 Feet

Make sure to extend the side rails at least 3 feet above the upper level. This allows you to move safely from the ladder to the landing.

Secure at Bottom

Brace or tie off the ladder near the base. If there is no structure to tie off to, then you can tie it off to a stake in the ground behind the ladder.

Secure at Top

While getting help to hold the ladder in position, secure the top of the ladder so that it cannot move away from the wall or move sideways. Lashing a rung to an anchor is one way to secure a ladder. Make sure the anchor will hold.

Keep Area Clear of Hazards

Clear away debris, clutter, and obstructions from the areas around the bottom and the top. Barricade or rope off the area around the bottom of a ladder to protect it from traffic.

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