



Portable Ladders Fact Sheet

What is a portable ladder?

A portable ladder is a ladder designed to be moved from location to location. The primary use is to provide easy access to elevated or below grade surfaces. There are various designs of portable ladders, including stepladders, straight ladders, combination ladders and extension ladders.

What are the hazards associated with using portable ladders?

Improper use of portable ladders is a leading cause of occupational fatalities and injuries. The primary injuries and fatalities are associated with falls while moving or using a ladder. In the case of aluminum or other metallic ladders, electrocution is a primary hazard.

What can I do protect myself?

- Read and follow all labels and markings on the ladder.
- Look for overhead power lines before handling a ladder.
- Always inspect the ladder prior to using it.
- If the ladder is damaged, remove it from service and tag it until repaired or discarded.
- Always maintain a three-point (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand) contact on the ladder when climbing.
- Ladders must be free of any slippery material on the rungs, steps or feet.
- Use a ladder only on a stable and level surface, unless it has been secured (top or bottom) to prevent displacement.
- Do not move or shift a ladder while a person or equipment is on the ladder.

Does NCDOL have standards for ladders?

Yes, the following are general standards NCDOL has adopted for ladders:

- **29 CFR 1910.25 and .26**—general industry
- **29 CFR 1926.1053**—construction industry

Additionally, various industry- or hazard-specific standards discuss ladder use.

How can I learn more about ladder safety?

Please review our Quick Card titled “*Falls Protection*” and Industry Guide # 32 – *Fall Prevention in Industry* on our [publications page](#). The NCDOL Library also has [ladder safety videos](#) available under the “Ladder Safety” heading in the Video and DVD database.