

## Fall Protection

Inevitably, at some point, employees will ask about when to use fall protection with portable ladders. OSHA does not currently require fall protection on portable ladders; only on fixed ladders of 24' or higher. However, employers should consider situations that may warrant requiring employees to don personal fall arrest, such as:

- Working on ladders at or near leading edges
- Working on ladders over hazardous equipment
- Working on ladders for extended periods of time
- Situations that require the worker to face away from the ladder

**March is the first-ever National Ladder Safety Month. Each year in the U.S., more than 500,000 people are treated, and about 300 people are killed due to ladder-related injuries.**

**The estimated annual cost of ladder injuries in the U.S. is \$24 billion, including work loss, medical, legal, liability, and pain and suffering expenses. (NIOSH, 3/17)**



## The Most Dangerous Piece of Equipment on the Job Site

**“The ladder, the simplest piece of equipment, is the most deadly.”**

Unfortunately, most workers don't give ladder safety much thought due to its simplicity. After all, what's so dangerous about climbing a ladder?

Well, did you know that falls are the number one cause of death on the job site? They account for about 35% of fatalities. And, did you also know that ladders are the number one reason for falls and that most fatal falls are from 10' or less? This makes the ladder the most dangerous piece of equipment on the job site.

Additionally, ladders are consistently in OSHA's top 10 most cited violations; 2,129 ladder citations were issued in 2020. Let's look at the most common individual standards cited:

**1. The 3-Rung Rule.** Per OSHA, any portable ladder that is used to access an upper landing surface must extend a minimum of 3' above said landing. If it doesn't, it must be secured at its upper edge to a stable surface, and a grabrail installed to assist workers onto the landing. Why 3 rungs? Each rung equals 1 foot. [1926.1053(b)(1)]

**2. Ladders Can Only Be Used As Ladders.** This seems pretty straightforward. You should never use a ladder as make-shift scaffolding, a bridge, a working platform, a walk-board, etc... [1926.1053(b)(4)]

**3. The Everybody-Knows-This-Rule.** Say it with me, “Do not stand on or above this step.” OSHA is pretty clear on this one. The standard says, “The top or top step of a stepladder shall not be used as a step.” [1926.1053(b)(13)]

**4. Inspect and Tag-Out Damaged Ladders.** Portable ladders should be inspected daily for damage to rungs, rails, spreaders, evidence of corrosion or rust, or any other defect that compromises the ladder's safety. When defects are found, tag the ladder and remove it from service. [1926.1053(b)(16)]

**5. Don't Be a Hero.** Never climb a ladder while carrying something that can cause you to lose your balance and fall; don't overload yourself. Use lifts, rigging and hoisting equipment, or tow ropes to lift equipment and/or materials. [1925.1053(b)(22)]

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