



Portable Ladder Safety

Overview

A quick internet search for “Bad Ladder Safety” returns plenty of pictures – some funny, some cringe worthy – of how NOT to use a ladder. According to a [2014 report](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, ladders were involved in 20% of all workplace fall injuries.

To improve ladder safety in the workplace, OSHA regulates ladders in [Standard Number 1926.1053](#). In a [1996 interpretation letter](#), OSHA described Portable Ladders as follows, “29 CFR 1910.21(e)(2) defines fixed ladders as “a ladder permanently attached to a structure, building, or equipment.” Portable ladders are not defined in the standard, but by inference, a portable ladder would be any ladder not fitting the definition of a fixed ladder. The ANSI standard A14.2-1990 defines a portable ladder as “a ladder that can readily be moved or carried, usually consisting of side rails joined at intervals by step, rungs, cleats, or rear braces.””

Types of Portable Ladders

Ladders take many forms and many, if not all, can be found in common use in breweries. Generally, they are known as step ladders, extension ladders, platform ladders, multi-purpose ladders, telescoping ladders and folding ladders and are categorized by Duty Rating, based on their weight capacity.

Type	Use	Load
Type IAA	Rugged	375 lbs
Type IA	Industrial	300 lbs
Type I	Industrial	250 lbs
Type II	Commercial	225 lbs
Type III	Household	200 lbs

Statistics

Ladders often end up in the top 10 most cited standards in industry. In 2015, there were over 20,000 nonfatal injuries and 148

fatal injuries involving ladders in private industry.

Safeguards

Always inspect your ladder and the area of use before you use it.

- Look for damage to the feet, rungs, spreaders and rails.
- Check the label to be sure it is right ladder for the use. If the label is not there, or not legible, tag the ladder “Out of Use” and contact the manufacturer for replacement labels.
- Check overhead for dangers such as electrical lines, moving equipment or sharp objects.
- Check the footing to be sure that it is level and secure.
- If using a straight or extension ladder, be sure that the object you are leaning it against is secure and capable of supporting the force of the ladder and user leaning against it.
- Position an extension ladder one foot away from the object for every four feet of ladder height. Use the handy smart phone app from NIOSH for this or with your toes against the base of the ladder place your hands on the ladder’s rung – this puts the ladder at the 75° angle.
- If possible, tie off the top and bottom of the ladder.

Fall Protection

OSHA does not require fall protection for employees working on portable ladders, however there are several techniques to reduce the risk of falling while working on them.

Although these may seem like common sense, they often are forgotten in the rush to get the job done. A couple minutes extra to follow these safety techniques can save an injury and a lifetime of suffering.

- Always maintain three points of contact while using a ladder – that is two feet and one hand or two hands and one foot in contact with the ladder at all times.

- Never stand on the top two rungs of any ladder.
- Do not carry tools or materials while you are going up or down a ladder. Use a rope or other technique to raise or lower them while maintaining a secure hold on the ladder instead.
- Have a coworker hold the base of the ladder while you go up, work on and back down the ladder.
- Stay centered between the rails of the ladder and do not reach beyond an arm’s length of the side rail. Move the ladder if the object is out of reach.

Storage

Properly stored ladders will help to maintain the ladder’s safe use for many years. Follow these suggestions to be sure the ladder is not damaged by the storage technique or is not likely to injure workers in the area.

- Find a location where ladders are away from traffic and possible damage from vehicles and items nearby.
- Keep ladders stored in areas free from excessive heat, cold, moisture, chemicals or sunlight.
- If storing ladders horizontally, use racks spaced no more than six feet apart.
- Do not hang ladders from the rungs or rails.
- Securely chain off ladders that are stored against a wall or object if they are over 4 feet in height to protect them from tipping over.

Links

- [American Ladder Institute - Choosing the Right Ladder](#)
- [NIOSH Ladder Safety App](#)
- [OSHA Portable Ladder Safety Quick Card](#)

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON BREWERY SAFETY, PLEASE VISIT THE MBAA BREWERY SAFETY WEBSITE AT:
<http://www.mbaa.com/brewresources/brewsafety>