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# Ladder Safety: What You Need to Know

Falling from height continues to be the biggest cause of workplace fatalities in the UK. Thousands of lives are affected, with life changing injuries common from both high and low level falls. Many of these incidents are caused by falls from ladders, often from misuse or due to the poor selection of equipment used for a particular task.

## What is the latest legislation surrounding ladder safety?

The [Ladder Association](#) has released new ladder standards (LA455) in partnership with the HSE, having replaced the HSE guidance INDG455. This updated guidance illustrates the importance of training and offers guidance on different types of portable ladders, including telescopic and combination.

## What do operatives need to consider to ensure the safe use of ladders?

To reduce the risk and demonstrate high standards of safety, employers should ensure that operatives:

- › Choose certified ladders which are wider, stronger and sturdier – EN131 'professional' use ladders should be adopted across all workplaces. They are designed for more demanding workplace conditions and can also be used at home. This is not a legal requirement but is highly recommended in order to reduce the risk of a ladder failing. Meanwhile, EN131 'Non Professional' are intended for lighter, occasional use. They can be used at home but not in the workplace
- › Choose the right type of ladder for the right task – such as leaning ladders, step ladders, combination ladders, telescopic, roof ladders
- › Choose the right material – such as aluminium, fibreglass, wood and steel
- › Choose the right height – operatives should never have to stretch or overreach, which is a very common case of falls and failing ladders. They should adhere to the three points of contact with belt buckle within the two vertical stiles
- › Ensure that the ladder has an identification label that is checked formally by a competent person and is recorded in line with the below recommended frequencies:
  - › For Frequent Use (i.e. used daily) – three monthly inspection frequency
  - › For Occasional Use (i.e. used weekly) – six monthly inspection frequency
  - › For Infrequent Use (i.e. used less than monthly) – 12 monthly inspection frequency.
- › All ladders should be visually inspected by the operative before every use, and a recorded system as described above should also be implemented.

### What visual checks should operatives undertake before the ladder is placed into use?

Operatives should undertake visual checks before the ladder is in use, before checking the feet, stiles, rungs and locking mechanisms. If the ladder is damaged, faulty or painted, it should be removed as soon as possible, ensuring that the following precautions are taken:

- › Mark the ladder as unfit for use
- › Withdraw the ladder from use
- › Destroy – cut down the centre and recycle
- › Repair – by manufacturer or their authorised agent.

To ensure that operatives are competent at using a ladder, it is a mandatory requirement for them to undertake training so that both they and their supervisor have a full understanding of the importance of safe and appropriate use.

## How can SOCOTEC help?

SOCOTEC can provide clients with the advice, support and training required to ensure safe working with ladders, as well as general working at height management.

[Click here](#) to find out more or [contact us](#).