

TT045 – Safe Use of Ladders

January 2025

An estimated 70 people fall from steps or ladders a week in NZ.

Main reason: Ladder bases slipping out.



We always protect
ourselves against falls

Is a ladder best suited for this job?

Ladders are not designed to be used as a platform for continuous working but rather *for short duration tasks* i.e., changing a light bulb or touching up paint.

The following needs to be considered for work at height:

- Eliminate the chances of a fall by doing as much preparation work as possible on the ground.
- Minimise the risk of a fall by taking actions to prevent it. For example, isolate the worker from the risk by using scaffolds and edge protection.

Is the ladder safe for use?

- Choose the correct type of ladder for the task. For example, make sure it is **the right height or style for the task**, and use **non-conductive ladders** in areas where there are electrical hazards.
- Ladders must have an **industrial rating (minimum 120kg)** and meet, or exceed, the requirements of the relevant AS/NZS 1892 Portable ladders standard.
- The person setting up the ladder should be **trained and competent** or supervised to work safely.
- There should be **no loose, broken or missing parts** – It's not worth the risk!
- Ladders should be **clearly labelled, structurally sound**, and not covered in chemicals or other materials.

Is it set up correctly?

- Use a ladder with **slip-resistant feet**.
- **Secure the ladder at the top and bottom** to prevent it slipping sideways or outwards - some ladders have stabilising clips. If a ladder cannot be secured, have a second person provide footing for added stability. *Footing a ladder means having a second person physically hold the base of the ladder while it is in use. This should only be considered, following a risk assessment, if other means of safely securing the ladder cannot be achieved.*
- Place the ladder on **firm, level ground**.

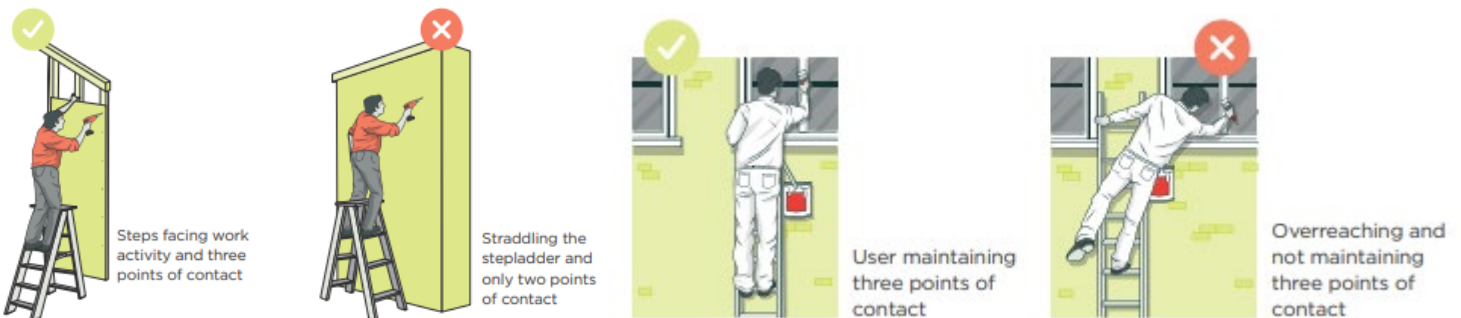
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- Place straight ladders 1m out at the base for every 4m of height for stability. Step ladders should **be fully opened, and bars locked** in place.
- Ladder should extend 1m above landing place and at least **4m clear of powerlines**.
- **Consider weather** conditions when setting up a ladder.

Tips for working safely from stepladders:

- Take a 5x5 or a S.T.E.P – Stop Think Evaluate Proceed.
- Have the steps facing the work activity.
- Avoid standing on the top two steps of the ladder. This makes it unstable and prone to tipping over.
- Avoid side-on loading work (for example, drilling side-on through bricks or concrete).
- Where side-on loading cannot be avoided, prevent the ladder from tipping over by tying the steps to a secure point. If this cannot be done, use access equipment that is more suitable.
- Avoid holding items when climbing and use a tool belt or hoist.
- NEVER straddle a ladder.
- Do not exceed the rated safe working load of the ladder.
- Do not overreach – keep the centre of your torso within the stiles and both feet on the same rung while working.
- Carry tools on a tool belt. Do not rest tools or other items on the steps or hang them from the rungs.



Keep **three points of contact** on the ladder at all times for safety, in case you slip. For example, holding on with any of your feet or hands, and including bracing your body (like your knees or chest) against the ladder when you briefly need two hands free.

More Info:

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/small-business/80622418/Wellington-builder-fined-after-workers-ladder-fall-tells-of-stressful-prosecution>

