

# Spot The Safety Violation: It's Like Bringing a Knife to a Gun Fight



Is an extension ladder really the best choice for this job?



Workers can get hurt if they use the wrong tool for the job. For example, step ladders and extension ladders are both common and useful pieces of equipment in many workplaces. But they're not interchangeable. In many situations, using one type of ladder will be perfectly safe, while using another will endanger workers.

This picture from the US Naval Safety Center shows two workers using an extension ladder when clearly a step ladder would've been the appropriate—and safe—choice. If the worker holding the ladder up gets tired, slips or even sneezes, he could lose his grip or jostle the ladder, causing his co-worker to fall.

Here's another example of workers using an extension ladder for a job that required a step ladder.

### **Keys to Portable Ladder Safety**

You should understand and comply with the requirements under the OHS laws for portable ladders, such as step ladders and extension ladders. And it's critical that you train workers who use ladders on these requirements and how to safely use this equipment—including how to select which type of ladder is appropriate

for the task at hand.

For example, when using portable ladders, workers **SHOULD**:

1. Inspect ladders before using them to ensure that they're in good condition.
2. Try to maintain three points of contact with the ladder at all times.
3. Carry tools in a tool belt or raise and lower them with a hand line.
4. Ensure that their shoes/boots are clean and have slip-free soles.
5. Face the ladder and stand in the centre of the side rails.
6. Secure the ladder from moving or have a co-worker hold it.
7. Ensure the legs of a step ladder are fully extended and locked in place.
8. Make sure they and their materials don't exceed the ladder's load limit.

And workers **SHOULD NOT**:

1. Work from the top two rungs, steps or cleats, the top cap or the bucket/pail shelf of a portable ladder unless the manufacturer's specifications allow the worker to do so.
2. Carry heavy or bulky objects or any other object that may make going up or down the ladder unsafe.
3. Splice or lash ladders together to extend their length.
4. Place ladders in front of or against a door unless the door is blocked in the open position, locked or otherwise guarded.
5. Use a ladder as scaffold flooring, support for scaffold flooring or a horizontal walkway.
6. Place a ladder on a box, barrel or other unstable base.
7. Move a ladder while someone is on it.

And give workers this quiz to ensure that they know how to safely use ladders.