

Spot The Safety Violation: Sometimes a Ladder Isn't Right for the Job



Is a ladder really the right tool or equipment for this job'

An important element of workplace safety is selecting the right tools and equipment for the job. Choosing an inappropriate tool can put workers at risk.

The worker in this picture from [WorkSafe Victoria](#) clearly chose the wrong equipment for the job. The ladder he selected wasn't tall enough to reach the top of the tree. Instead of elevating the step ladder in this dangerous manner, he should've either gotten a taller ladder or opted for another piece of equipment, such as an elevated or aerial work platform.

6 Key Facts about Portable Ladder Requirements

Here are six key facts you need to know about [complying with the ladder safety requirements](#) under the OHS laws:

1. Commercially made ladders must generally comply with designated voluntary standards from the CSA or ANSI.
2. Ladders made on site must comply with detailed construction requirements in the OHS regulations.
3. You must ensure that ladders are well maintained and inspected before use for any defects that could endanger workers. (Download this [ladder inspection form](#) that workers can use to inspect ladders before using them.)
4. Ladders, especially extension ladders, must be properly positioned, generally maintaining a 1:4 ratio.
5. Workers must properly use ladders and *not* use them for unintended purposes.
6. In some cases, workers working from ladders must wear fall protection.

When workers set up a step ladder, they should ask the following questions:

- Is the step ladder on a flat, stable and hard surface' (Step ladders need to be on flat surfaces and shouldn't be set up on other elevated platforms, such as was done in this picture.)
- Are all four feet touching the ground so that it doesn't rock'
- Is the surface hard enough to prevent it from creeping and settling once it's loaded'
- Is the bottom of the ladder clear of loose materials that can create a trip or slip hazard when stepping on/off the ladder'
- Is the ladder clear of any doors that can swing open and hit it'
- Are both spreaders that create the A-frame of the ladder fully engaged and locked'

- If the ladder's being used in a public area, is the work area marked off to warn passing individuals'
- Is the setup clear of any electrical hazards, such as [overhead power lines](#)'
- Is the ladder clean of loose debris and dry'
- Is it free of anything that could increase the risk of slipping on the rungs'

Supervisors can use this [step ladder safety checklist](#) to ensure that workers are properly setting up, moving on and working from step ladders.