


TRAINING GUIDE

PORTABLE LADDERS



Before you begin the meeting...

- Does this topic relate to the work the crew is doing? If not, choose another topic.
- Did you read this Training Guide and fill in the blanks where the  appears? (To find the information you need, look over the Safety Walkaround Checklist for this topic.)
- Did you bring a portable ladder so you can show the crew how to inspect it?

Begin: Did you know that even a six-foot fall from a ladder can kill you? More often, you might break an arm or leg. When you fall off a ladder on a construction site, you can land on almost anything, so internal injuries are common.

Falls from ladders happen because **you** slip or because the **ladder** slips. If you're in a hurry, there's more chance of falling. Take the time to use the right ladder the right way.

You or a crew member may want to add a personal story about portable ladders.

Explain: The main topic today will be **portable** ladders. They may be either metal or wood. On many construction sites there are also **fixed** ladders. The safety rules for fixed ladders are a little different, and we won't cover them today.

Next, discuss with the crew what types of portable ladders will be used at this particular job site, and where:



ASK THE CREW THESE QUESTIONS:

After each question, give the crew time to suggest possible answers. Use the information following each question to add points no one mentions.

1. **More than half of all ladder accidents happen because the ladder slips. What are some ways to keep a ladder from slipping?**
 - Place the ladder on a firm, level surface that isn't slippery.
 - Use a ladder with safety feet, especially if you're setting it on a smooth floor.
 - Always secure a portable ladder. Nail it to a permanent structure, tie it off, or block it.
 - Make sure the ladder's supports (feet and upper risers) are free of grease and mud.
 - If the ladder is leaning against a smooth surface, have wall grips on the risers to prevent side slipping.
 - Make sure the ladder is leaning against something secure (not a gutter, window sash, window pane, or anything that can move).



- Don't set a ladder on top of boxes or other movable objects.
- Never use a ladder in high winds.
- Barricade a ladder if it's in an area where it could get bumped. For example, don't use a ladder in front of a door that might open, unless there is a barricade or guard.
- Make sure your ladder is at the correct angle—not too steep and not too horizontal.

2. What's the correct angle for a ladder?

- Set it 1 ft out for every 4 ft of ladder length.

3. Nearly one-third of all ladder accidents happen because a person slips. What are some things you can do to keep yourself from slipping?

- Use a ladder with non-skid treads (or a non-skid coating) on the rungs.
- Make sure the rungs are free of mud, grease, and other slippery material.
- Make sure your shoes are free of mud and grease.
- When you're on a ladder, don't lean too far out—never beyond arm's length.
- When going up or down a ladder, always:
 - Face the ladder.
 - Use both hands.
- Don't try to adjust an extension ladder when you're standing on it or on a surface above it.
- Don't stand or work on the top three rungs of a straight ladder unless you're using a safety belt. At the top, there's nothing to grip.
- Don't step on any rung above a ladder's upper support. It may cause the bottom of the ladder to kick out.
- Don't stand or work at the top of a stepladder.
- If you use a stepladder, make sure it's fully open and locked.

4. How should you carry tools or materials up or down a ladder?

- Use a tool belt to keep your hands free.
- Pull equipment and materials up with a line.

5. To make sure your ladder is in good repair, you should inspect it before and after each job. When you inspect a ladder, what should you look for?



Using the portable ladder you brought to the meeting, demonstrate the points below.

- Make sure:
 - All rungs are connected securely to the side rails.
 - No rungs or side rails are missing, loose, broken, cracked, or corroded.
 - No nails, screws, or rivets are sheared off or missing.
 - There are no splinters.

6. What if a ladder is defective?

- If you ever notice an unsafe ladder, report it right away.
- The employer should remove defective ladders from service and tag them.
- Some employers destroy defective ladders to make sure no one uses them.



7. People say to “use the right ladder for the job.” What are some things to keep in mind when you’re choosing a ladder?

- Use a ladder that is **safety-approved**. Look for a label showing that it meets American National Standards Institute (ANSI) safety requirements.
- Use a ladder of the **right length**. The side rails should extend at least 3 ft, but not more than 4 ft, above the ladder’s upper support.
- Use a ladder that’s **strong enough** for you and the job.
- **Never splice** two ladders together.
- Don’t let more than **one person at a time** on a ladder unless you’re using a ladder that’s specially designed for that purpose.
- Don’t use a **metal ladder near live electrical parts** or within 6 ft of high voltage electrical lines. (Increase the distance for very high voltage). Remember that electricity can arc. Portable metal ladders should have a warning label on them to remind you.
- Don’t use a ladder for anything but its **intended purpose**. For example, don’t use it as a brace or skid. Don’t use it horizontally as a walkway or scaffold.

OSHA Regulations

Explain: Most of the safety measures we’ve talked about are required by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). We have to take these precautions—it’s the law. I have a Checklist of the OSHA regulations on portable ladders. If you’d like to know more, see me after the meeting.

Company Rules

(Only if applicable.) In addition to the OSHA regulations, we have some company rules about portable ladders.



Discuss company rules: _____

Comments from the Crew

Ask: Do you have any other concerns about portable ladders? Do you see any problems on our job? *(Let the steward answer first, if there is one.)*

What about other jobs you’ve worked on? Have you had any experience with portable ladders that might help us work more safely on this job?



GENERAL SAFETY DISCUSSION

This is a time to discuss all safety concerns, not just today's topic. Keep your notes on this page before, during, and after the safety meeting.

Are you aware of any hazards from other crews? Point out any hazards other crews are creating that this crew should know about. Tell the crew what you intend to do about those hazards.

Do we have any old business? Discuss past issues/problems. Report progress of investigations and action taken.

Any new business? Any accidents/near misses/complaints? Discuss accidents, near misses, and complaints that have happened since the last safety meeting. Also recognize the safety contributions made by members of the crew.

Please remember, we want to hear from you about *any* health and safety issues that come up. If we don't know about problems, we can't take action to fix them.

To complete the training session:

- Circulate Sign-Off Form.*
- Assign one or more crew member(s) to help with next safety meeting.*
- Refer action items for follow-up. (Use the sample **Hazard Report Form** in the Reference Section of this binder, or your company's own form.)*



