

Facilities Management from A to Z



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Ladders

On average 12 people a year die at work falling from ladders and over 1200 suffer major injuries. Ladders remain the most common agent involved and account for more than a quarter of all falls from height. Employers have a duty to assess the risks, plan and supervise all workers who work at height. The Work at Height Regulations (2005) came into force in April 2005.

Where work at height is necessary the facility manager will need to justify whether a ladder or stepladder is the most suitable access equipment compared to other access equipment options. This is done by risk assessment.

When considering whether it could be appropriate to use a ladder or stepladder, a range of factors must be considered: Is it a suitable activity? Is it a safe place to use a ladder or stepladder? Is the ladder or stepladder safe to be used? Do the ladder-users know how to use them safely? Is the ladder a suitable size for the work?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recommend Class 12, 3 'Industrial' or EN 1314 ladders or stepladders for use at work. When buying a new ladder, consideration should be given to the worst type of surface conditions where it might be used, for example smooth, wet floor tiles.

Manufacturers should be able to indicate the types of surfaces their products are intended to be used on when they are not secured or tied. The ladder and associated stability devices should only be bought if the supplier or manufacturer can confirm that it will be stable enough to be used unsecured in the worst-case scenario, otherwise additional measures will be required to secure it.

Users should establish the ladder or stepladder is in a safe condition before using it. This should be part of their training. Ladders or stepladders should have no visible defects and should have a pre-use check each working day and have a current detailed visual inspection. They should also have been maintained and stored in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. This also applies to stability devices and other accessories.

Records should be kept of ladder maintenance, detailed inspections, risk assessments and user training.

Information on Ladder Safety is available from www.hse.gov.uk including a useful Toolbox Talk and Pocket Card which is available in a range of languages