

Safety Short

Portable Extension Ladders

Each year, about 50 workers are killed by falls from ladders. More than half of the deaths occur to people working from ladders. Twice as many falls occur stepping down compared to going up ladders. The main cause of falls from straight and extension ladders is sliding of the ladder base. A lot of workers carrying ladders hurt their backs, too. Protect Yourself. Choose the right equipment. Use ladders mainly for climbing to or from other levels. If you can, instead of using ladders to work from, use scaffolds or scissor lifts; they are safer to work from. Always choose the right ladder length, type, and load rated portable extension ladder. All commercial ladders have information stickers which will tell you the maximum weight capacity. Jobsite made ladders are permitted provided they are constructed to specific ANSI Standards.



Here are some Do's and Do not's for safe portable ladder use.

DO's . . .

- Inspect all portable extension ladders prior to use, take it out of service if defects are found.
- Both feet of the portable extension ladder should be set on a level, stable surface that is not slippery; if that is not possible, secure or stabilize the ladder to prevent accidental displacement. Post caution signage or barricades when ladders are used in and around walkways and access points.
- Place portable extension ladders with both rails supported against a wall or other supporting solid surface.
- Remember to set up the portable extension ladder at an angle of 4 to 1. In other words set the base of the ladder one foot away from the supporting surface (horizontal length) for every four feet of vertical height to the supporting point.
- Extend portable extension ladders at least three feet above the top height supporting surface.
- Maintain a minimum of 10 feet of clearance from all electrical sources. If voltages are 50kv or greater, increase the clearance distance to 20 feet or more.
- Maintain three points of contact with the portable extension ladder at all times. This can be a firm grip with two hands and one foot or one firmly grasped hand and both feet when ascending or descending any portable ladder. Grasp the ladder and don't just slide your hands along the side rails.

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- Always stay between the side rails of the portable ladder, don't overreach outside of the side rails. Move the ladder if needed.
- Always secure either the top, base or both of the portable extension ladder to prevent accidental movement of the ladder.
- Review and follow the ladder manufacturer's instructions and warning posted on the labels attached to your portable extension ladder.

DO NOT's . . .

- Always use a portable extension ladder for purposes for which it was not designed. It should not be used as a walking bridge for example.
- When working around live electrical components use only fiberglass or wood (non-conductive materials) portable ladders to avoid accidental electrical shock. Remember the 10 foot or greater minimum clearance rule from live electrical components.
- Keep your hands free to grasp the ladder. Never carry or hold materials and tools in your hands when ascending or descending a portable extension ladder. This will not allow you to properly grasp the portable extension ladder which can contribute to your loss of balance and possible fall.
- Never attempt to move or reposition a ladder while you or someone else is standing on it.
- Only one person on the portable extension ladder at any given time.
- If the portable extension ladder is heavy, don't attempt to set it up by yourself, get some additional assistance with the set up.



Stay Safe Out There!!!



Maine Municipal Association
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