

Deciding whether to use a ladder

When deciding whether to use a ladder, always check whether there is a safer, viable alternative available (e.g. whether the work can be undertaken on the ground, whether a step platform can be used.) If there is no viable alternative, a ladder can then be used.

Risk assessment involving use of a ladder

If there is a risk of a person falling more than two metres, a risk assessment must be undertaken. It must consider:

- The type of task, and how long it will take.
- The physical surroundings and conditions in which the task will be undertaken.

Some other factors to consider before beginning using the ladder could be:

- Will the job involve working near electricity? Is it safe to use a metal ladder?
- Are the surfaces the ladder will rest on unstable?
- Is there anything likely to prevent the ladder from being set up and secured properly?
- Does the person have to 'face away' from the ladder when going up and down, or working on it?
- Does the ladder show any evidence of faults?
- Is the ladder too short to allow the person to stand on a rung at 900mm from the top, or stand below the second tread below the top plate?
- Will the person be required to work on the ladder for more than a couple of hours, increasing the likelihood of fatigue?
- Will the job involve heavy work or the use of both hands to hold something?

If the answer to any of these questions, or questions like it, is "yes", then additional measures will need to be taken to ensure the work can be done safely.

Where the ladder is used, it may be necessary to have a second person and/or witches hats or a barrier on hand to ensure the ladder is not knocked by passing traffic, pedestrians or animals.

Correct use of ladders

Ensure the ladder is set safely and securely. Whenever possible, the worker should:

- Face the ladder when going up and down or working from it.
- Stand on a rung at 900mm from the top.
- Stand below the second tread below the top plate.

Ladder Maintenance

Ladders need to be regularly inspected to ensure it does not pose a risk in itself. Ladders with any faults should be replaced or repaired.