

---

SafeWork NSW

---

# The pocket guide to ladder safety

For micro and small businesses  
and subcontractors



# About this guide

Each year there are dozens of serious incidents where workers have fallen from ladders. Most of these incidents involve a ladder being used incorrectly or inappropriately.

Workers in construction, manufacturing, retail and building maintenance are most commonly injured; however any worker using a ladder is at risk.

When it comes to ladders, serious and fatal falls can happen from both step ladders and extension ladders. It doesn't matter how far you fall. If you land on your head on concrete, you can be seriously injured or even killed.

This guide provides useful information for common health and safety issues relating to the use of ladders relevant to New South Wales WHS laws. It will help you manage the health and safety of workers and others on and around your worksite.

# QR Code instructions

In this guide you will find a number of QR codes which will direct you to further information.

To use the QR code you must download a QR reader application to your mobile device. Free apps are available on the App Store (iOS) or Google Play Store (Android).



Once you have downloaded the QR reader, open it and scan the QR code on the page. This will open the document where you can find further information, videos, publications, etc.



# General information and resources for working at heights

Access the SafeWork NSW Working at Heights webpage via the QR Code link below. The webpage provides useful information and material including guides, videos and checklists.



View



Working at Heights  
SafeWork NSW

# Working at heights

**WARNING:** Extreme care should be exercised for any work conducted on a ladder.

Working at heights could mean working as high up as a multi-storey building, or as low down as the second rung from the bottom of a ladder.

Have you planned the work properly and identified suitable precautions to make sure work can be carried out safely? (Precautions include safe access, management of hazards such as brittle roof, open voids, unprotected edges, adverse weather conditions and site conditions)

Can you avoid working at heights by conducting work from the ground?

If you can't work from the ground, have you ensured fall prevention equipment is used such as scaffold, guard rails or an elevating work platform?

Have you ensured there is appropriate training and fit-for-purpose controls to prevent workers from falling from heights?

## More Information



Managing  
the risk  
of falls at  
workplaces

# Ladders

Workers just want to get in and get the job done. But a little bit of up-front planning can make the difference between going home safely or living with a life-long devastating injury. There are other types of equipment that may be safer to use than a ladder such as a work platform, scissor lift, elevating work platform or scaffold.

Are you only using the ladder for appropriate activities (e.g. short-term work, access and egress)?

Choose the right tool for the job – can you buy or hire some alternative equipment that would provide a safer means of access (such as mobile scaffold, elevated work platform or platform ladder)?

Is the ladder in good condition and industrial rated (120kg)?

Is the ladder set up on a flat, stable surface?

Do you need ladder safety devices like leg levellers, anti-slip gutter guards and stabilisers?

Is the ladder high enough so that users don't have to over-reach?

Are materials being transported safely (i.e., not carried up a ladder)? Use a pulley or rope and bucket system instead.

## Extension ladders

Workers are most at risk of falling from an extension ladder:

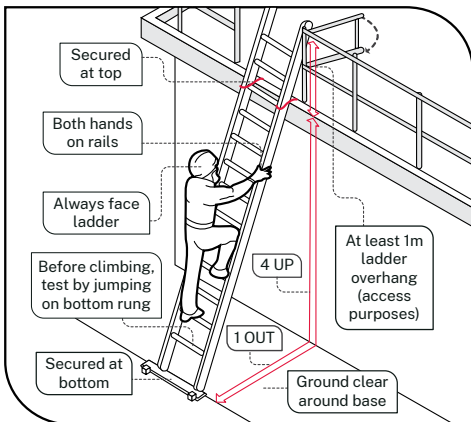
- if the ladder slips either outwards or sideways
- if they lose balance, or
- when getting on or off the landing space.

Is the ladder secured at the top and bottom to prevent it slipping sideways and outwards? If this isn't possible, have someone hold it in place while in use.

Does it extend at least 1 m above the landing place?

Is it resting against a solid surface that can support it and you?

Is it angled at a ratio of 1:4 (the base of the ladder 1 m away from the structure for every 4 m of height)?



## A-frame style step ladders

Workers are most at risk of falling from an A-frame style step ladder if they are:

- standing on the top 2 steps and/or
- over-reaching.

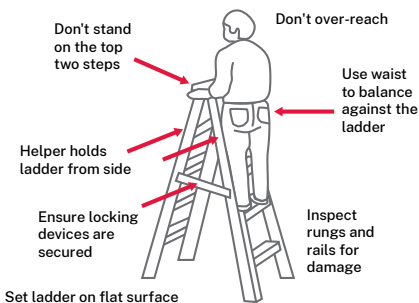
Is the ladder tall enough so that users don't have to stand on the top two rungs? If not, a taller ladder is required.

Are all four feet of the ladder in contact with the ground, and are the locking devices secured?

Are both feet and one other point of contact e.g., hand, waist or torso, in contact with the ladder? If not, you need a taller ladder or a safer piece of equipment.

### A-frame style step ladders

Falls are often due to standing on the top few steps or over-reaching.





### Contact us on 13 10 50.

People with a speech or hearing impairment can make or take phone calls using the following:

- For voice calls or telephone typewriter (TTY) call 133 677 then ask for 13 10 50.
- For a speak and listen service call 1300 555 727 then ask for 13 10 50.
- For an SMS relay service call 0423 677 767 then type 13 10 50.
- Speak Up Safe Lives app



### Notifying us of an incident

If there is a serious injury or illness, a death or a dangerous incident, you must report it to us immediately on 13 10 50 as an urgent investigation might be needed.

Incidents can be notified 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

#### More contact information



Make an internet relay call then type 13 10 50



SafeWork NSW website  
[www.safework.nsw.gov.au](http://www.safework.nsw.gov.au)



Speak Up app

# Disclaimer

This publication may contain information about the regulation and enforcement of work health and safety in NSW. It may include some of your obligations under some of the legislation that SafeWork NSW administers. To ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate legislation.

Information on the latest laws can be checked by visiting the NSW legislation website [www.legislation.nsw.gov.au](http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au)

This publication does not represent a comprehensive statement of the law as it applies to particular problems or to individuals or as a substitute for legal advice. You should seek independent legal advice if you need assistance on the application of the law to your situation.

This material may be displayed, printed and reproduced without amendment for personal, in-house or non-commercial use.

View



NSW legislation website  
[www.legislation.nsw.gov.au](http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au)





Catalogue No. SWNSW\_35646\_23

SafeWork NSW

92-100 Donnison Street, Gosford, NSW 2250

Locked Bag 2906, Lisarow, NSW 2252

Customer Experience 13 10 50

Website [www.safework.nsw.gov.au](http://www.safework.nsw.gov.au)

© Copyright SafeWork NSW 1121