California Schools JPA℠

SAFETY MATTERS

RISK MANAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

IN THIS ISSUE **JAN. 26, 2024**

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PORTABLE LADDER SAFETY

OBJECTIVE To help prevent falls from portable ladders.

A portable ladder is a ladder that can be easily moved or carried and used year-round to complete tasks. Although these ladders are easy to use and move around, they can also pose risk of injury if not used properly. Workers who must be out on ladders need to be ready for anything, including weather conditions.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PORTABLE LADDER SAFETY

Falls from portable ladders (step, straight, combination, and extension) are one of the leading causes of occupational fatalities and injuries.

During this time of year, some mornings can still be very cold, meaning that ice, frost, and dew could cause a hazard. In addition, the weather might be fine when workers start their shift, but it can quickly cloud over and cause showers. Preparation is key here.

Workers should check that the ladder is in good condition in order to prevent an accident. They should also make sure that they have the right kind of ladder for the job.

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TIPS FOR PORTABLE LADDER SAFETY

- Read and follow all labels/markings on the ladder.
- Avoid electrical hazards! Look for overhead power lines before handling a ladder. Avoid using a metal ladder near power lines or exposed energized electrical equipment.
- Always inspect the ladder prior to using it. If the ladder is damaged, it must be removed from service and tagged until repaired or discarded.
- Always maintain a 3-point (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand) contact on the ladder when climbing. Keep your body near the middle of the step and always face the ladder while climbing.
- Only use ladders and appropriate accessories (ladder levelers, jacks, or hooks) for their designed purposes.
- Ladders must be free of slippery material on the rungs, steps, or feet.
- Do not use a self-supporting ladder (e.g., step ladder) as a single ladder or in a partially closed position.
- Do not use the top step/rung of a ladder as a step/rung unless it was designed for that purpose.
- Use a ladder only on a stable and level surface unless it has been secured (top or bottom) to prevent displacement.
- Do not place a ladder on boxes, barrels, or other unstable bases to obtain additional height.
- Do not move or shift a ladder while a person or equipment is on the ladder.

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- An extension or straight ladder used to access an elevated surface must extend at least three feet above the point of support. Do not stand on the three top rungs of a straight, single, or extension ladder.
- The proper angle for setting up a ladder is to place its base a quarter of the working length of the ladder from the wall or other vertical surface.
- A ladder placed in any location where it can be displaced by other work activities should be secured to prevent displacement or a barricade must be erected to keep traffic away from the ladder. The distance at the bottom of the ladder should be one-fourth (1/4) the distance to the top where the ladder comes in contact with the wall or roof support.
- Be sure that all locks on an extension ladder are properly engaged.
- Do not exceed the maximum load rating of a ladder. Be aware of the ladder's load rating and of the weight it is supporting, including the weight of any tools or equipment.
- Do not carry tools in your hand while climbing a ladder. Using tool belts, shoulder straps, or hoists will allow you to keep your hands free so you can maintain 3-point contact
- Do not extend your body beyond the rails to reach another point, as this can cause the ladder to tip over. Keeping your belt buckle between the rails will help you keep the ladder steady.
- Desks, rolling chairs, countertops, tables, boxes, and other objects should not be used to complete tasks instead of a sturdy ladder. These items were not designed to support you like a ladder and can be unstable and unsafe.

CONTENT RESOURCE

Occupational Safety and Health Administration

Cal/OSHA §3276. Portable Ladders

This California Schools JPA fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice.