

OSHA Training Toolbox Talk: Transporting Portable Ladders Safely

[Reference 1910 Subpart D / 1926 Subpart X]

I think we will all agree that a damaged ladder is an unsafe ladder. And many portable ladders become damaged when we are transporting them to, from, and around the job site by hand and on our vehicles. So here are a few tips to help prevent damaging our portable ladders as they are being transported.

- Never move a portable ladder from one place to another by dragging it across the ground. And do not drag your portable ladder out of your truck bed or off of a pipe rack or trailer and let the unsupported end fall to the ground. Doing so can cause the end being dragged or dropped to suffer damage. If the ladder is too heavy or too long to lift or carry by yourself, then get someone to help you.
- Slow down and pay extra attention when approaching a blind corner while carrying a portable ladder. Doing so can help you avoid striking equipment, material, or another person, that may be located on the other side.
- Wrap a short piece of rope, twine, or wire to secure the two sections of your portable step ladder together when you are going to fold it flat to carry. This can help prevent the two sections from separating as you are carrying the ladder, and may help you or a helper avoid getting a finger or hand caught in a pinch-point.
- Take the time to lower the upper section of an extension ladder before you carry it to another position. The ladder may weigh the same in either position, but the leverage created by a longer ladder can cause extra stress on your back and make it easier to suffer an injury
- Never throw a ladder into the bed of a pickup or onto a trailer. Instead, place it as gently as possible onto the truck or trailer bed, and avoid laying it over any object that could cause it not to lie completely flat.
- When hauling a portable ladder on a pipe or ladder rack, make certain the ladder lies flat enough to make contact with all horizontal members of the rack. Secure the ladder to the rack using ropes or straps that are tied snug enough to prevent the ladder from bouncing around. Also, place some form of padding, such as foam, rubber, or carpet, between the ladder and the rack, where possible, so as to minimize damage-causing vibrations as the vehicle is being driven.
- Avoid carrying a portable ladder that is too long to fit comfortably onto your ladder rack or trailer bed. Letting a ladder hang too far off the end of the rack or bed can cause the ladder to flex and bow, especially as you drive down the road, suffering permanent deformation.
- Once you get to your destination and unload the ladder and set it up for use, do not forget to conduct a visual inspection to see if any damage may have occurred as you were moving the ladder.

It's also a good idea to always read and follow any ladder manufacturer's instructions and warning regarding transporting your extension ladder.

Does anyone have any additional tips to share for the safe transport of portable ladders? Thank you, and please be sure to sign your name to the training certification form so you get credit for attending today's training session.