

## OSHA Training Toolbox Talk: Portable Ladders – Types and Working Loads

[Reference 1910 Subpart D / 1926 Subpart X]

A ladder is a ladder is a ladder . . . right? Actually, nothing could be farther from the truth, especially when it comes to portable ladders. There are two primary categories of portable ladders on the market, and each category is comprised of two or more specific types of ladders. Portable ladders are also manufactured from different materials, in various lengths, and with different load capacities. We will cover all of these variables in future toolbox talks. But today we will start by identifying some of the most common types of portable ladders, as well as how to identify their maximum load rating.

The first general category of portable ladders are what's known as **self-supporting ladders** (*refer trainees to the handout that comes with this toolbox talk for a few examples of portable ladders*). These portable ladders can hold themselves in an upright position when properly erected, and include regular step ladders (also known as fold-out ladders), plus most types of specialty ladders, such as two-way ladders, articulated ladders, and platform ladders. The other general category of portable ladders is what's known as **non-self-supporting ladders**, because they have to be leaned against a wall or other solid surface to stand. These include single ladders and extension ladders.

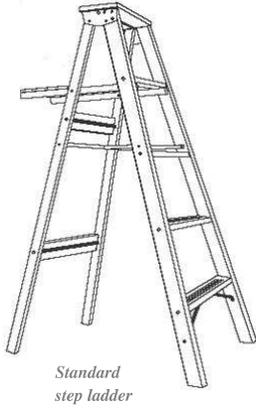
All of these types of portable ladders have different uses, which we will discuss in upcoming toolbox talks. But portable ladders also have different capacity ratings. Ladder manufacturers communicate the maximum working load limit and duty rating of their portable ladders by attaching a sticker on one, or both, side rails of their ladders (*refer students to example on the handout for this toolbox talk*). Here is an overview of the working load limits that are assigned to various portable ladders:

- **Type III - Light-Duty Portable Ladder** - For users requiring a maximum **200-pound working load** or duty rating. For use on an occasional basis, such as general household use. Some state OSHA regulations (*like California*) actually prohibit the use of a Type III light-duty portable ladder at any work site.
- **Type II - Medium-Duty Portable Ladder** - For users requiring a maximum **225-pound working load** or duty rating. Common use by some commercial painters, in office settings, and for light maintenance work. Most medium-duty portable ladders must not be used with ladder jacks or scaffold planks.
- **Type I - Heavy-Duty Portable Ladder** - For users requiring a maximum **250-pound working load** or duty rating. Commonly used in factories and industrial settings, for utility work, and at construction sites.
- **Type IA – Extra Heavy-Duty Portable Ladder** - For users requiring a maximum **300-pound working load** or duty rating. Commonly used in factories, industrial settings, for utility work, and construction sites.
- **Type IAA - Special-Duty Portable Ladder** - For users requiring a maximum **375-pound working load** or duty rating. Also used in factories, industrial settings, for utility work, and at construction sites.

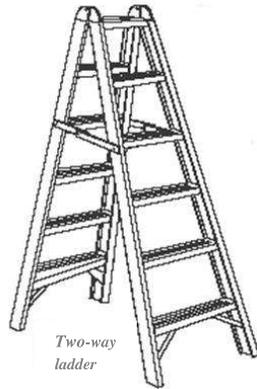
It is important to know the working loads stated above includes not just the ladder user's weight, but **also** the weight of clothing, PPE, tools, materials, and anything else carried or placed onto the ladder. So take the time to calculate the total weight of **everything** before you climb onto a portable ladder.

Does anyone have any questions about the general categories, types, and capacity ratings of portable ladders? Please be sure to sign your name to the training certification form so you get credit for attending today's training session.

## SELF-SUPPORTING PORTABLE LADDERS



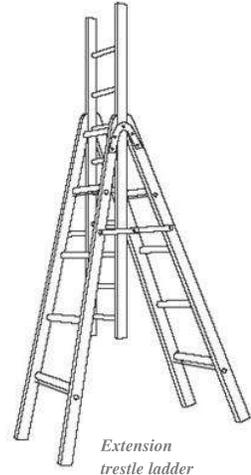
Standard step ladder



Two-way ladder



Platform ladder (mobile)



Extension trestle ladder

## NON-SELF-SUPPORTING PORTABLE LADDERS



Single ladder



Extension ladder

## PORTABLE LADDER TYPES / RATINGS / WORKING LOADS

TYPE	DUTY RATING*	WORKING LOAD**
III	LIGHT DUTY	200 lbs
II	MEDIUM DUTY	225 lbs
I	HEAVY DUTY	250 lbs
I-A	EXTRA HEAVY DUTY	300 lbs
I-AA	SPECIAL DUTY	375 lbs



\* **Duty rating.** The combination of factors, including but not limited to ladder type and design features, which imply service capability.

\*\* **Working load.** The maximum applied load, including the weight of the user, materials, and tools, which the ladder is to support for the intended use.