

OSHA Training Toolbox Talk: Portable Step Ladders – Safety DO's and DO NOT's

[Reference 1910 Subpart D / 1926 Subpart X]

Many of the most common accidents that occur when we use a portable step ladder can be avoided by observing the following tips:

DO's . . .

- Always inspect your portable step ladder before use, and take it out of service if there is any deficiency found that affects its safe use.
- Make sure all four feet of the portable step ladder are set on a level and stable surface, and that both ladder spreaders are fully extended and locked into place before use.
- Keep your ladder, your body, your tools and any materials at least 10 feet away from energized electrical conductors (or even further for higher voltages exceeding 50kv).
- Always make sure at least one of your hands is firmly **grasping** a rung or side rail when you are climbing up or down a ladder. And be aware that just sliding your hand along a side rail as you ascend or descend the ladder does **NOT** constitute “grasping” the ladder.
- Maintain your balance and center of gravity on your portable step ladder by keeping your belt-buckle between the two side rails. Reposition the ladder instead of over-reaching.

DO NOT's . . .

- Never use a portable step ladder for purposes for which it was not designed. For example, do not lean a closed portable step ladder against a wall or other surface for the purpose of climbing, or stand on one that has been placed across objects in a horizontal position.
- Do not use a portable step ladder made of metal or any other conductive materials when performing any task or working in an area where you, your tools or materials, or the ladder could make contact with energized electrical conductors or equipment.
- Never climb up or down a portable step ladder while carrying any object that prevents you from firmly grasping the ladder with at least one hand - or that could cause you to lose your balance.
- Do not place any tools or materials on the top cap or any step of your ladder that might fall and strike someone if the ladder were to be bumped or inadvertently moved.
- Never stand on the top cap of a regular portable step ladder, or on the top step. Always follow the ladder manufacturer's rules and warning stickers for proper standing surfaces.

While these are not the only precautions and prohibitions applicable to the use of a portable step ladder, heeding these simple tips can go a long ways towards protecting all of us who do use them from accidents, injuries, and even death.

Does anyone have any questions or comments about these tips for the safe use of portable step ladders? Anyone have an additional tip to share? 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.