SEPTEMBER
SAFETY TALK

Ladder Safety

Injuries from falls from ladders happen far too often to municipal workers.

Employers, Supervisors and Workers all have responsibilities with respect to ladder safety, and need to understand that one ladder is rarely suitable for all jobs.

The first step in ladder safety is to determine if a ladder is the right tool for the job.

WorkSafeBC has created a Risk Assessment Checklist for ladder safety, available on their website.

Risk assessment checklist
for ladder safety

Before choosing any piece of equipment for working at heights, you must assess the risks. If you are thinking of using a ladder, evaluate all hazards associated with the environment, the equipment, and the task. Then, you'll know if a ladder is the right tool for the job.

Work task and location: _____

Legend: Low risk — appropriate; Moderate risk — proceed with caution; High risk — do not use

Instructions: Consider each of the following questions before taking into account the associated risk level. If you identify one of the following items as high risk, do not use a ladder. If you identify a moderate risk, consider another type of equipment, such as a work platform, scaffold, or stairway for working at a height.

Before choosing a ladder, ask yourself the following:	Yes?	No?
1 Will more than one worker be climbing the ladder for access?	!	✓
2 Will a worker or workers be carrying unrestrained tools or materials up the ladder or to the work location?	✗	✓
3 Does the work task on the ladder require handling heavy loads or unstable objects?	✗	✓
4 Can the worker maintain three points of contact on the ladder at all times?	✓	✗
5 Does the work location require a fall protection system?	!	✓

If a ladder is the right tool for the job, confirm the following before you use it:	Yes?	No?
6 Have workers received the information, instruction, and training necessary to use the ladder safely?	✓	✗
7 Are the ladder manufacturer's labels legible?	✓	✗
8 Is the manufactured ladder Grade I, IA, or IAA for use in construction?	✓	!
9 Is the ladder designed to meet the acceptable CSA, ANSI, or WorkSafeBC Standard?	✓	✗
10 Has the ladder been inspected before use on each shift?	✓	✗
11 Has the ladder been set up and placed correctly?	✓	✗

Supervisor name: _____ Signature: _____

Employer: _____ Date: _____

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If a ladder is the correct tool for the job, then selecting the correct ladder is the next step, by answering these questions:

1. What type of ladder is needed?
2. What size of ladder is required?
3. What material should the ladder be made from?
4. What duty rating is needed?

LADDER TYPES

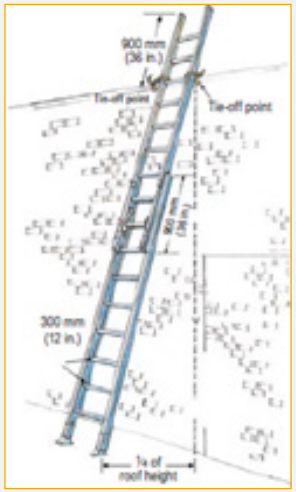
- Straight/Extension ladders
- Step ladders
- Trestle and Two-way Step Ladders
- Platform Step Ladders
- Combination Ladders

Extension ladders must extend 3 (and not more than 4) feet over the top of the structure. When setting up an extension ladder, remember the 1:4 rule: one foot out for every four feet up. To test this: Stand with your toes at your ladder's base and extend your arms straight out. If your fingertips touch the rung nearest your shoulder level, your ladder should be at the 4 to 1 angle.

Step Ladders are designed to be self-supporting and are designed to be used by one person at a time.

Safe use of step ladders:

- Place the base on a firm and level surface.
- Make sure that all four feet are on the ground; never climb a closed step ladder leaning for support against anything.
- Open and lock the spreader bars.
- Never stand on the top, or the first step from the top, of a step ladder.



LADDER MATERIAL

Ladders are made from a number of materials, each having its own characteristics and uses.

- Aluminum conducts heat and electricity.
- Fibreglass is heavier than aluminum but does not conduct heat or electricity.
- Wood is heavier yet, is a non-conductor of heat and electricity when clean and dry, but has a tendency to splinter, rot, warp and absorb moisture.

DUTY RATING

When selecting a duty rating adequate for your needs, you MUST allow for the combined weights of the user, clothes, tools and material.

The maximum load rating of the selected ladder should NEVER be exceeded. The maximum load capacity ranges from 200 pounds for Light Duty Household, to 375 pounds for Special Heavy Duty ladders. Ladders should not be used when the user, clothes, tools and material exceed 375 pounds.

LADDER INSPECTION

A thorough inspection should be carried out on each ladder before each use. Those that are damaged badly enough to break, bend or twist parts, should be immediately tagged DO NOT USE.

British Columbia Municipal Safety Association

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