



Ladder Safety

Ladders can be valuable tools at work, but if used improperly, they can be very hazardous. OHSU recognizes this and has a policy in place that regulates the use of ladders. This policy applies to all OHSU employees (including employees and students), at all OHSU locations, who use ladders at work.

Implementation of the provisions within this policy are the responsibility of each employee under the direction of individual OHSU departments.

Different ladders are made for specific uses. For a given task, you must select the right ladder to ensure your safety. New ladders must meet or exceed ANSI Type I-A specifications, with preference given to fiberglass construction.

Step Ladders may be constructed of aluminum, fiberglass, or wood, and they must have a metal spreader that locks the ladder open. They should only be used on firm and level surfaces. The maximum allowable length for a step ladder is 20 feet. These must **never** be used as a straight-type ladder (leaned up against a wall for use), as the footing was not designed for safe use in this manner. Never stand or sit on the top two steps of a step ladder! A longer ladder may be required to safely perform a given task.

Straight-type Ladders are not self-supporting ladders. They must be leaned up against a stable surface, with a 1:4 scope (1 foot away from the wall for every 4 feet in height). They may be constructed of aluminum, fiberglass, or wood, in either single or extendable lengths. The maximum allowable length for a single ladder is 30 feet, while extension ladders may reach up to 72 feet. Both should be placed on firm, stable footings, or utilize leg extensions or non-slip feet. Straight-type ladders should extend at least 3 feet above the accessed area, and they must be tied off to a secure anchor point if they are to be used repeatedly in the same spot.

Rolling Ladders are self-supporting, stair-type ladders that exist primarily in warehouse environments where rolling surfaces are smooth and level. Most rolling ladders are constructed of steel, so be aware of conductivity risks when working near electrical equipment.

Never use a ladder unless you have been trained. Always use three points of contact when using ladders (e.g.: two feet and one hand in contact with the ladder). Never carry awkward loads while using a ladder. Use ropes to haul heavy items up once you have reached your working height or surface. Never place tools or supplies on ladders steps if they could fall. Many injuries are caused by falling objects.

Each employee that routinely uses ladders at OHSU must receive initial training on the provisions in this policy prior to working with ladders.

This information is a service of the OHSU Safety Committee (503 494-7795).
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