

Risk Folder 10c pages 12 & 27

Stepladders

When using a stepladder to carry out a task:

- check all four stepladder feet are in contact with the ground and the steps are level;
- only carry light materials and tools;
- don't overreach;
- don't stand and work on the top three steps (including a step forming the very top of the stepladder) unless there is a suitable handhold;
- ensure any locking devices are engaged;
- try to position the stepladder to face the work activity and not side on. However, there are occasions when a risk assessment may show it is safer to work side on, e.g. in a retail stock room when you can't engage the stepladder locks to work face on because of space restraints in narrow aisles, but you can fully lock it to work side on;
- try to avoid work that imposes a side loading, such as side-on drilling through solid materials (e.g. bricks or concrete);
- where side-on loadings cannot be avoided, you should prevent the steps from tipping over, e.g. by tying the steps. Otherwise, use a more suitable type of access equipment;
- maintain three points of contact at the working position. This means two feet and one hand, or when both hands need to be free for a brief period, two feet and the body supported by the stepladder when deciding if it is safe to carry out a particular task on a stepladder where you cannot maintain a handhold (e.g. to put a box on a shelf, hang wallpaper, install a smoke detector on a ceiling), this needs to be justified, taking into account:
 - the height of the task;
 - whether a handhold is still available to steady yourself before and after the task;
 - whether it is light work;
 - whether it avoids side loading;
 - whether it avoids overreaching;
 - whether the stepladder can be tied (e.g. when side-on working).