



Standard Operating Procedure

Working at Height – Portable Ladders

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Approved by: PK
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1.0 Purpose

Work at height is work in any place, including a place at, above or below ground level, where a person could be injured if they fell from that place. Access and egress to a place of work can also be work at height.

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that all personnel including contractors are familiar with Dublin City University (DCU) policy on the use of portable ladders.

This in turn ensures that all ladders are in sound condition and are erected correctly.

2.0 Scope

This Procedure applies to all units of the university, both academic and support, including the campus companies and research centres. These are all hereinafter collectively referred to as the ‘university’.

The scope of the procedure includes:

- Purchasing of ladders
- Planning the task
- Setting up
- Working at height
- Using extension ladders
- Storage and Inspection
- Use of step ladders
- Training

2.0 References

- Safety Health & Welfare at Work Act 2005
- Safety Health & Welfare at Work (Working at Height) Regulations 2007
- Guide to the Safety Health and Welfare at Work (Work at Height) Regulations 2007
- Safety Health & Welfare at Work (Construction Regulations) 2013
- HSA Using Ladders Safety Information Sheet

4.0 Responsibilities

4.1 Head of School/Unit should;

- Notify Estates via the Estates Help desk of purchases of portable ladders
- Ensure that persons using ladders within their unit/school have read and understood this procedure

- Ensure that persons using ladders within their unit/school have received training in the safe use of ladders including pre use inspection checks, see Appendix 1
- Ensure that a suitable storage area is available for ladders
- Ensure that the requirements of ladder safety as outlined in the SOP are adhered to
- Ensure that ladders within the school/unit are subject to an annual third party inspection and that records of same are retained

4.2 Estates

- Provide a competent person to carry out periodic inspections of notified ladders
- Retain records of same
- Include inspection program for ladders in schedule of preventative maintenance checks

5.0 Procedure

5.1 Purchasing of Ladders:

Ladders come in all shapes and sizes designed for all sorts of jobs. It is therefore very important that the ladder you select for a specific job is the correct one. Ladders are designed and manufactured to comply with the different British and European standards set out to help the user identify a ladder that will be safe.

Ensure that the ladder is marked with:

- The number and date of the relevant British or European Standard
- The name, address and trade mark of manufacturer of supplier (to ensure you have a contact for any redress that may be required)
- The 'Class & Duty rating'- e.g. the maximum weight the ladder is capable of sustaining and the usage capacity such as low domestic use or high trade use

5.2 Planning the job

- Is a ladder the right equipment for the job?
- Is the ladder to be used as a means of access, e.g. onto scaffolding or a roof, or will someone be using the ladder as a 'work platform'?
- Ladders should only be used as a 'work platform' for uncomplicated work with a short duration for a period of less than 30 minutes. If a ladder is not suitable then consideration should be given to the use of more suitable equipment, e.g. stepladders, scaffolding, tower scaffold systems, Mobile Elevating Work Platforms, etc.
- Even where ladders are used only as a means of access and egress, precautions must be taken to prevent the ladder slipping, etc. In addition where a ladder or run of ladders rises a

vertical distance of 9 meters or more, landing areas/rest platforms should be provided wherever practicable.

- Has the right ladder been selected for the job? Some ladders may be too short for high work comfortably without over reaching up, down or sideways. Has the right class of ladder been selected?
- For outdoor use, are the weather conditions going to affect the use of a ladder e.g. ladder may slip in icy weather.

Before use;

- Always visually inspect a ladder before it is used Refer to Appendix 1
- Check for damage to the stiles (uprights), rung and top platform
- Check that plastic caps and/or rubber fittings are not missing (replacements can usually be obtained from the supplier or manufacturer)
- Never use a ladder that is defective. Do not attempt to repair damage. Always report damaged equipment immediately to your supervisor.
- Make sure the rungs are clean and dry. Beware of wet, greasy and icy rungs.
- Wear flat firm soled shoes/boots with clean soles and a good grip.
- Check that there are no overhead hazards near where you are going to work, e.g. overhead electric lines.

5.3 Setting up

- Always check the manufacturer's instructions when setting up equipment.
- Do not use, or carry metal ladders (or wooden ladders when wet) beneath low power lines.
- Position the ladder on a firm and level base. There should be no makeshift use of bricks, timber or other packing to gain extra height or level up the stiles.
- All ladders must be secured. (Ladders must be secured at the stiles, not by the rungs)
- If a ladder cannot be adequately secured at the top, it must be secured at the base (e.g. blocks, stakes, sandbags, stabilisers, etc). If the ladder cannot be adequately secured, a second person must foot the ladder for the full duration of the work being carried out.



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- Always rest the ladder against a solid surface (e.g. not against plastic gutter or against a narrow feature) and secure the top of the ladder by tying it off. A second person should foot the ladder when this is being carried out.
- The overall length of the ladder is not the same as its usable length. When used for access to scaffolding, roofs, etc the ladder should extend at least 1 metre (at least three rungs) above the landing place. If a person is working off a ladder, there should be 1 metre of ladder length above the highest rung on which the worker has to stand. (Rungs are usually a third of a metre apart).
- The ladder should be placed at 75 degrees to the horizontal. One measure out from the building, for every four measures up.
- Do not use ladders outside in strong winds.
- If ladders must be used close to the corners of buildings, the area must be appropriately cordoned off to ensure that there is sufficient warning of presence of ladder

5.4 On the Ladder

- Always face the ladder and use both hands when climbing up and down the rungs.
- If you need to carry tools up a ladder use a shoulder bag, tool belt etc
- Hold the ladder with one hand while you work. Special trays are available to fit between the stiles where necessary. If the work requires the use of both hands then another means of access should be used (scaffolding, tower scaffolds, Mobile Elevating Working Platform).
- Never carry heavy items or long lengths of material up a ladder.
- Always keep both feet on the rungs whilst working. Never have one foot on the ladder and the other foot on something else (e.g. window ledge, wall, etc). Do not over-reach. Move the ladder and re-secure it. Keep your body within the stiles (uprights) while working.
- Never work off the top rung of a ladder.
- Never have more than one person on the ladder at any one time.

5.5 Extension Ladder

- If you are using an extension ladder, make sure you know how to use it correctly. Accidents have occurred where extension ladders have been used the wrong way round, causing the ladder to collapse.
- On extension ladders over 5 metres (approx. 18 rungs) there must be an overlap of at least three rungs. On extension ladders over 6 metres, this overlap should be 4 rungs. On shorter



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extensions ladders (less than 5 metres) there should be a minimum overlap of at least two rungs.

- Ordinary ladders must never be lashed, tied or spliced together to try and make an extension ladder.

5.6 Putting up Step-Ladders

- Make sure the step-ladder is locked into its correct position. Follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Rest it on a firm, level base; use a large flat board on soft ground.
- Position the step ladder front-on to the work.

5.7 Storage

- Ladders can be stored vertically or horizontally.
- If they are hung vertically they should be secured to prevent them from falling over. Ladders should never be hung vertically from their rungs. A rack or wall brackets will allow ladders to be hung horizontally from the stiles.

6.0 Training

All staff that use ladders and step-ladders should be trained in how to use them safely and how to spot defects. Ladder training must include how to check it, erect it, use it and move it in a safe manner.

<https://www.americanladderinstitute.org/page/LSTVideos>

7.0 Records

Full Ladder inspections shall be performed at periodic intervals, typically annually, as part of the preventative maintenance schedule. Inspection reports in relation to same will be retained by the Estates office.

Visual inspections should be carried out before and after normal use.

As part of a system of inspection and maintenance, ladders should be individually identified with a Tag Number.

This identification may include marking or painting small areas of the ladder. However, painting should be kept to an absolute minimum, as painting may hide defects.



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Ladders found defective should be clearly labelled or marked and withdrawn from service until repaired, or disposed of.

All records of Annual inspection should include:

- The name and address of the person for whom the inspection was carried out.
- The location of the ladder.
- A description of the ladder (type and identification).
- Date and time of the inspection.
- Details of anything that may be a risk to any employee.
- Details of any action taken
- Details of any further action considered necessary.
- The name and position of the person making the report.

8.0 Contact

DCU Health and Safety Office
CG10 Henry Grattan Building,
DCU Glasnevin Campus
Dublin 9
01 700 8678

9.0 Document Control

Revision No:	Date:	Purpose of Revision:
01	April	New SOP



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Appendix 1

Portable Ladder pre-use inspection checklist

GENERAL ITEMS INSPECTED
Side rails in good condition
Steps or rungs not loose or damaged
Spreader braces not damaged and open fully
Nails, screws, bolts not missing or damaged
Ladder free from oil, grease, or slippery materials
Manufacturer's labels, warnings, and ratings posted
Movable parts operate freely
Wooden parts free from splinters, cracks, decay
Non slip feet not damaged and in good condition
Ladder stored properly to prevent damage
STEP LADDERS
Stepladder is not wobbly and loose
Hinges not loose or damaged
EXTENSION LADDERS
Loose, broken, or missing extension locks
Locks seat properly when ladder is extended
Pulley, rung locks, and rope are in good condition

Note: Ladders found defective should be clearly labelled or marked and withdrawn from service until repaired, or disposed of.



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Training acknowledgement

I confirm that I have read, and understood the standard operating procedure, and I understand that as an employee, it is my responsibility to work in accordance with the procedure.

If I have questions about the procedure, I understand it is my responsibility to seek clarification from my supervisor.

PRINT NAME	School/Unit	Signature	Date