Technical Guidance Note:
LADDER and STEPLADDER**COMPLIANCE**

David Derbyshire: Technical Committee Chair

April 2025

The British Sign and Graphics Association

British Sign & Graphics Association

British Sign & Graphics Association

Technical David Derbyshire Committee Chair

CONTENT:

British Sign & Graphics Association

Choosing the Right Ladder:

Ensure the ladder or stepladder is suitable for the task, considering factors like load capacity, length, and material.

Ladders and stepladders should conform to the EN131 standard.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/ladders/types-of-ladder.htm

Pre-Use Checks:

Prior to each use, conduct a 'pre-use' check to identify any obvious defects.

Inspect the stiles, feet, rungs, locking mechanisms, and other components for damage or wear.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/ladders/how-to-check-ladder-is-safe-before-use.htm

Safe Usage Practices:

Use ladders and or, stepladders only on firm, level ground. Secure the equipment to prevent movement and maintain three points of contact during use.

Avoid overreaching and ensure the ladder is positioned at a safe angle**.**

https://www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/ladders/types-of-ladder.htm

Securing Ladders:

Whenever possible, tie the ladder to a suitable point. If this is not feasible, use a ladder stability device or securely wedge the ladder. Footing the ladder should be a last resort.

.

Training and Competence:

Only individuals who are competent - or under the supervision of a competent person - should use ladders. Competence is demonstrated through training, practical experience, and knowledge of safe working practices **.**

https://www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/ladders/index.htm

KEY REGULATIONS and GUIDANCE...

Ladders and stepladders are not banned under health and safety law.

They can be a sensible and practical option for low-risk, short-duration tasks, although they should not automatically be your first choice.

There are simple, sensible precautions you should take to stay safe when using portable leaning ladders and stepladders in the workplace.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/ladders/index.htm

Ladders and stepladders are indispensable tools within the signage industry, frequently used for installation, maintenance, and inspection tasks.

However, improper use can lead to serious accidents. Falls from height remain one of the leading causes of workplace injuries, underscoring the importance of ladder safety.

Adhering to key regulations, such as the **Work at Height Regulations 2005** ensures that organisations and individuals operate safely, reducing risks to team members and the public whilst demonstrating professionalism and compliance.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/the-law.htm

British Sign & Graphics Association

KEY POINTS OF COMPLIANCE :

Ladders and Stepladders are not banned under UK health and safety law. They can be a safe and practical option for low-risk, short-duration tasks when used correctly.

- ✓ **Risk Assessment evidence a higher-level fall protection is not required.**
- ✓ **The task is low risk and short duration.**
- ✓ **Workplace features cannot be altered to accommodate alternative equipment.**

⚠ **IF A TASK REQUIRES MORE THAN 30 MINUTES ON A LADDER OR A STEPLADDER - CONSIDER ALTERNATIVE EQUIPMENT.**

British Sign & Graphics Association

“

CONDUCT A PRE-USE CHECK - PRIOR TO EACH USE...

IF ANY **DEFECTS** ARE FOUND, DO NOT USE...

It is the employers responsibility to ensure that any ladder and or, stepladder is both suitable for the operational task and, is in a safe, working condition prior to use.

PRE-USE CHECKS do not need to be documented. Any areas of concern, damage, faults and or, issues should be reported IMMEDIATELY - inline with organisational accepted custom and practices.

”

Pre-use checks and inspections of ladder stability devices and other accessories should be performed in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions.

Pre-Use Check and Inspection: WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

- **Stiles:** No bends or damage
- **Feet:** Present, undamaged, clean, and stable.
- **Rungs:** Secure and not worn.
- **Locking Mechanism:** Working correctly.
- **Stepladder Platform and Steps:** Not damaged, loose, or slippery.

EMPLOYERS MUST ENSURE THE FOLLOWING:

Only **ladders** and or, **stepladders** that have no visible defects are available for **operational use**...

Formally documented, current records of the detailed visual inspections carried out regularly by a **competent person** are maintained and reviewed...

Ladders and **stepladders** are suitable for the intended use, and have been **maintained** and **stored** in accordance with the **manufacturer's instructions**...

LEANING_LADDER:

Only carry light materials and tools – read the manufacturer's labels on the ladder and assess the risks.

Do not overreach – make sure your belt buckle (or navel) stays within the stiles.

Make sure the ladder is long enough or high enough for the task.

Do not overload the ladder – consider your weight and the equipment or materials you are carrying before working at height.

Check the pictogram or label on the ladder for any advisory information.

To help make sure the ladder angle is at the safest position to work from- you should use the 1-in-4 rule.
This is where the ladder should be one space or unit of measurement out for every four spaces or units up (a 75° angle).

Always grip the ladder and face the ladder rungs while climbing or descending – do not slide down the stiles!

Do not try to move or extend the ladder while standing on the rungs.

Do not work off the top three rungs. Try to make sure that the ladder extends at least 1 metre or three rungs above where you are working.

Do not stand ladders on movable objects, such as pallets, bricks, lift trucks, tower scaffolds, excavator buckets, vans or mobile elevating work platforms.

Avoid holding items when climbing (consider using a tool belt).

Do not work within 6m horizontally of any overhead power line, unless it has been made dead or it is protected with insulation. Use a non-conductive ladder (eg fibreglass or timber) for any electrical work.

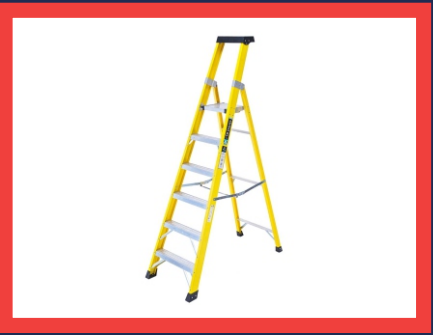
Maintain three points of contact when climbing and wherever possible at the work position.

Where you cannot maintain a handhold, other than for a brief period (eg to hold a nail while starting to knock it in, start a screw etc), you will need to take other measures to prevent a fall or mitigate the consequences if one happened.

Secure the ladder (eg by tying the ladder to prevent it from slipping either outwards or sideways) and have a strong upper resting point (ie do not rest it against weak upper surfaces such as glazing or plastic gutters).

Consider using an effective stability device (a device which, if used correctly, prevents the ladder from slipping, some types of ladders come with these).

STEP_LADDER:



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.

Do not overreach!

Do not 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.

For example:
In a retail stock room when you cannot 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.

For example:
Bricks or concrete.

Where side loadings cannot be avoided, you should prevent the steps from tipping over - for example - by tying the steps. Alternatively, use a more suitable type of access equipment

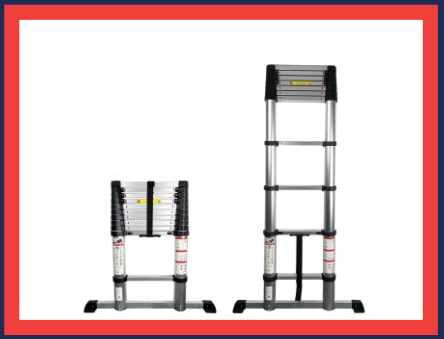
Maintain **three points** of contact at the working position. This means **two feet** and **one hand**, or when both hands need to be free for a brief period, two feet and the body supported by the stepladder.

When deciding whether it is safe to carry out a particular task on a Stepladder where you cannot maintain a handhold - for example - to hang / apply large format wallcoverings in vertical drops - the decision needs to be justified, taking into account the following:

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.

For example:
Side-on working.

TELESCOPIC_LADDER:



Telescopic Ladders are a variation of Leaning Ladders but, remember that they do not all work in the same way!

Follow manufacturer instructions carefully.

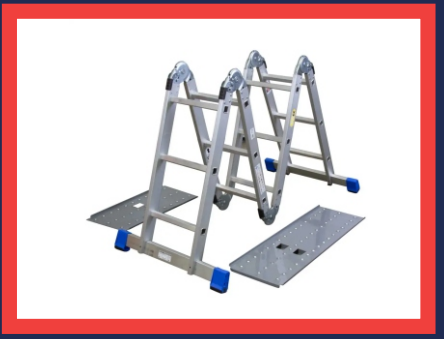
Check locking mechanisms before use.

Keep clean and store properly .

Avoid finger-trapping hazards when closing.

Remember some of the important parts are inside where they cannot be seen - If you are in any doubt, do not use them!

COMBINATION_and_MULTI_PURPOSE_LADDER:



Combination and **Multi-purpose Ladders** can be used as Stepladders, a variation of Stepladders or Leaning ladders.

Combination ladders are sometimes referred to as 'A' frame ladders.

As these types of ladders can be used in a variety of different configurations.

You should:

Check to ensure that any locking mechanism is properly engaged before use.

Always recheck the locking mechanism if the setup of the ladder is changed.

On three-part Combination Ladders - NEVER extend the top section (the section extending above the A frame) beyond the limit marked on the ladder and specified in the user manual.

OVERVIEW_Where a Ladder and or Stepladder should be used:

On firm ground - On level ground - On clean, solid surfaces - Where it will not be struck by vehicles.

Where it will not be pushed over by other hazards - such as doors and or, windows.

Where the general public are prevented from accessing the area.

Where the access equipment has been secured.

OVERVIEW_Securing Ladders:

Tie the ladder to a suitable point, making sure both stiles are tied.

Where this is not practical, secure the ladder with an effective ladder stability device. If this is not possible, securely wedge the ladder. If you cannot achieve any of these options, foot the ladder.

OVERVIEW_Ladders used for access:

Ladders used to access another level should be tied and extend at least 1 m above the landing point to provide a secure handhold.

At ladder access points, a self-closing gate is recommended.

Stepladders should not be used to access another level, unless they have been specifically designed for this.

ANY**QUESTIONS..?**

The British Sign and Graphics Association

Northgate Business Centre
Northgate
Newark
Nottinghamshire
NG24 1EZ

0845 338 3016

ask@**uksigns**.org

https://**uksigns**.org/