
Portable Ladder Inspection And Three Point Contact Setup

1.0 Objective & Intent

The objective of this SOP is to establish mandatory procedures for the inspection and safe use of portable ladders in the cabinet and millwork manufacturing facility. This procedure is intended to prevent falls from height, which are a leading cause of serious injury and fatality in the woodworking industry. Compliance with WorkSafeBC OHS Regulation Part 11 (Fall Protection) and Part 13 (Ladders, Scaffolds, and Temporary Work Platforms) is mandatory. This SOP mitigates the specific risk of ladder collapse, slipping, and loss of balance during setup and use.

2.0 Operational Scope

This procedure applies to all maintenance personnel, machine operators, and any employee who uses a portable ladder (step ladder, extension ladder, or platform ladder) within the facility. It covers all portable ladders owned by the company, including those stored in maintenance shops, production areas, and warehouse zones. This SOP does not apply to fixed ladders, scaffolding, or aerial lifts.

3.0 Hazard Identification & Mandatory PPE

- Fall from height: Loss of balance, ladder kick-out, or structural failure.
- Slip/Trip: Wet or oily ladder rungs, uneven floor surfaces, debris at base.
- Electrical contact: Using metal ladders near live electrical equipment or overhead power lines.
- Overreaching: Leaning sideways or backwards beyond the ladder's side rails.
- Overloading: Exceeding the ladder's duty rating or carrying heavy tools while climbing.
- CSA-Approved Steel Toed Boots with slip-resistant soles.
- Class E (Electrical Hazard) rated footwear when working near electrical sources.
- Cut-resistant gloves (ANSI A4 or higher) for handling ladders with sharp edges or splinters.
- Safety glasses with side shields to protect from debris or overhead hazards.
- Hard hat (CSA Z94.1) when working in areas with overhead obstructions or moving loads.

4.0 Required Safety Equipment & Tools

- Portable ladder inspection checklist (printed or digital on SafeDesk).
- Ladder levelers or leg extensions for uneven surfaces.
- Ladder stabilizer or stand-off device for extension ladders.
- Ladder tie-off straps or rope for securing top of ladder.
- Rubber non-slip ladder feet (replace if worn).
- Tool belt or pouch to keep hands free during climbing.
- Flashlight for inspecting ladder in low-light areas.
- Warning signs or barricade tape to cordon off ladder setup area.

5.0 Step-by-Step Safety Procedure

1. Select the correct ladder type and length for the task. Ensure the ladder is rated for the combined weight of the user plus tools and materials (duty rating: Type IA – 136 kg or Type I – 113 kg minimum).
2. Perform a pre-use visual inspection of the entire ladder. Check for cracked, bent, or missing rungs, split side rails, loose rivets, damaged spreaders, and worn or missing non-slip feet. Reject any ladder with defects and tag it 'Do Not Use' immediately.
3. Inspect the ladder for contamination. Remove any grease, oil, paint, mud, or sawdust from rungs and side rails. Ensure the ladder is clean and dry before use.
4. Position the ladder on a stable, level, and non-slip surface. If the surface is uneven, use ladder levelers or leg extensions. Do not use bricks, boxes, or scrap material to shim the ladder.
5. Set the ladder at the correct angle. For extension ladders, the base must be one foot away from the wall for every four feet of ladder height (4:1 ratio). For step ladders, ensure the spreader is fully locked open and the ladder is fully opened.
6. Secure the ladder top and bottom. Tie off the top of the ladder to a secure anchor point using a ladder tie-off strap or rope. Have a second person hold the base of the ladder until it is secured. Place warning signs or barricade tape around the base to prevent pedestrian traffic.
7. Maintain three-point contact at all times when climbing or descending. Keep two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand, in contact with the ladder. Face the ladder and grip the side rails, not the rungs. Do not carry tools in your hands; use a tool belt or hoist materials up separately.
8. Climb only to the maximum safe working height. Do not stand on the top two rungs of a step ladder or the top three rungs of an extension ladder. Keep your belt buckle inside the side rails at all times. Do not overreach; move the ladder instead.
9. When the task is complete, descend using three-point contact. Remove any tie-offs and secure the ladder for storage. Return the ladder to the designated storage rack or area. Do not leave ladders lying on the floor or leaning against walls.
10. Document the inspection and use. Record the ladder ID, date, inspector name, and any defects found in the SafeDesk digital log. If a ladder was rejected, ensure it is physically removed from service and scheduled for repair or disposal.

Regulatory Disclaimer: This document is a generic safety template provided for educational and informational purposes only. It does not constitute professional engineering, legal, or regulatory compliance advice. The end-user assumes all liability for validating all safety protocols against specific machinery manufacturer manuals and local occupational health and safety regulations (e.g., WorkSafeBC, CSA standards) before deployment.