

A safer way to work in elevated places.

Photo courtesy of Honeywell Safety Products, manufacturer of Miller Fall Protection Products.



Aerial lift with full guardrails.

Mobile scaffold photo courtesy of Werner Co.



Scissor lift (left) and mobile scaffold.

Recent trends in construction indicate that a growing number of contractors are seeking to significantly reduce the use of ladders for elevated work. Increasingly, industry experts say a safer alternative for reaching high places is to use a properly protected working platform that meets or exceeds OSHA standards.

What's the risk to your business?

Falls are the leading cause of death in the construction industry. What's more, falls from ladders make up nearly a third of those deaths and result in thousands of severe injuries every year. Such incidents can drive up construction costs for your business and take a significant toll on workers and their families.

Some expert advice to help workers stay safe.

To help protect people and property at your job sites, Nationwide® Loss Control Services recommends that you take steps to reduce the use of ladders. You can do that starting today by insisting that your workers use a suitable elevated platform with the required fall protection (e.g., guardrails, personal fall arrest systems) for the chosen platform — instead of a ladder — whenever possible.

When a work crew needs to access an elevated work area, they should first think about the best equipment to use. And while a ladder may immediately come to mind, the following questions should be asked before a decision is made:

- Will awkward or heavy items be manually handled by the worker while on the ladder?
- Is the work area too high for a ladder to be used safely?
- Will the length of time to complete the task make ladder use unsafe?
- Does the job require frequent moving and/or awkward body positioning on the part of the worker?
- Does the job require pulling, pushing or holding tools or equipment?
- Is reaching required that places the trunk of the body outside the ladder rails?

If the answer is “Yes” to any of the above questions, workers should avoid using a ladder and opt for a readily available and properly set-up alternative, such as a scissor lift or mobile scaffold.

A plan to promote safety when overhead work is required.

All organizations, both large and small, should adopt this plan for helping workers avoid ladder-related falls and injuries:

- Develop a written policy to reduce the use of ladders. Stress the benefits.
- Specify ladder alternatives in any required “site safety plans.”
- Train workers in the proper erection, use and inspection of mobile scaffolding and lifts. Follow OSHA regulations and standards.
- Use wire pullers or pulleys to eliminate the need to work from a ladder. Use rope, pulleys, block and tackle, or other appropriate material-handling aids to lift materials onto elevated surfaces.
- Limit the number of ladders on the jobsite.
- Place ladders under the control of foremen, superintendents or safety personnel, and specify prompt return of a ladder once a job is completed.
- Designate ladder use for specific tasks only, consider all available options before “allowing” the choice of a ladder over alternatives, and maintain a permit system and/or logbook to document all such cases.
- When ladder use is permitted, use a podium stepladder (see photo), which is made with top rungs removed to promote worker safety.
- Check for unauthorized use of ladders frequently.
- Inspect equipment and repair/replace as needed.
- Monitor your program and make changes as needed to keep the program working smoothly and efficiently.
- NEVER loan equipment to persons outside of your organization, or leave equipment where it can be used by others without your knowledge.



Podium stepladder.

Photo courtesy of Werner Co.

For more information

Materials Available on OSHA Website:

Visit osha.gov and click on the “Publications” tab in the top navigation bar. In the “Search” window, type in the number or name of the item you wish to view (e.g., OSHA 3625 — 2013).

- **OSHA 3625 — 2013:** Ladder Safety: Falling Off Ladders Can Kill: Use Them Safely
- **OSHA FS-3662 — 2013:** Ladder Safety: Reducing Falls in Construction: Safe Use of Stepladders Fact Sheet
- **OSHA 3124 — 2003:** Stairways and Ladders
- **OSHA 2202 — 2011:** Construction Industry Digest
- **Aerial Lifts Fact Sheet**

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