



35 MacDonald Ave,
Dartmouth, NS, B3B 1C6
Tel: 902 468 6696
Toll Free NS: 1 800 971 3888
Fax: 902 468 8843
Web: www.constructionsafetyns.ca

Safe Job Procedure for Extension Ladders

1. Selection and inspection

- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment.
- Use a ladder that is designed for the task. Check the ladder's length, strength/grade and type/use.
- Use a fibreglass ladder when doing electrical work or when working in close proximity to electrical equipment.
- Inspect the ladder prior to each use for the following;
 - Damaged or worn non-slip feet.
 - Loose nails, screws, bolts or nuts.
 - Rotted, decayed or warped rails on wooden ladders.
 - Cracked or exposed fibreglass on fibreglass ladders.
 - Cracked, split, worn or broken rails, braces, steps or rungs.
 - Sharp edges on rails and rungs.
 - Rough or splintered surfaces.
 - Corrosion, rust, oxidization and excessive wear.
 - Twisted or distorted rails (check by sighting along the rails).
 - Missing identification labels.
 - Loose, broken or missing extension locks.
 - Defective locks that do not seat properly when extended.
 - Sufficient lubrication of working parts.
 - Defective cords, chains or ropes.
- Do not use a broken or unsafe ladder, attach a warning tag, take it out-of-service and advise your supervisor.

2. Operation

- Get help when handling a heavy or long extension ladder.
- Check for overhead electrical wires or other hazards before setting up the ladder.
- Clear the area around the base of the ladder of debris and other objects.
- Set up barricades and warning signs wherever necessary.
- Place the ladder on a firm, level surface and ensure it is secure.
- Erect the ladder so the upper section rests on (in front of) the bottom section (i.e. the bottom section faces the wall or supporting surface).

Please note: This document is for information purposes only as a guide. The safe job procedures (SJP) and safe work practices (SWP) created for your workplace should reflect your organizations processes, equipment and hazards as identified by a hazard analysis. Construction Safety Nova Scotia does not assume responsibility for the use of information in this document. If assistance is needed to complete a SWP and SJP for your organization please contact CSNS member services at constructionsafetyns.ca or 1.800.971.3888.



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- Two workers are required to set up a ladder weighing more than 25 kg (55 lb) or where conditions complicate the task.

Method for two workers setting up an extension ladder;

- Lay the ladder on the ground close to the intended location.
- One worker braces the ladder's base with his/her feet.
- The other worker grabs the top rung with both hands, raises the top end of the ladder over his/her head and walks toward the base of the ladder. Grasp the centre of the rungs.
- Move the erect ladder to the desired location. Lean it forward against the resting point.

Method for one worker setting up an extension ladder;

- Place the bottom of the ladder firmly against the base of the wall or stationary object.
 - Lift the top of the ladder and push upwards to raise the ladder to a vertical position.
 - Transfer the ladder to its required position when it is erect.
 - Keep the ladder upright and close to your body with a firm grip.
 - The method for lowering a ladder is the reverse of erecting it.
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- Place the ladder's feet so that the horizontal distance between the feet and the top support is 1/4 of the working length of the ladder.
 - The ladder should be leaning at a 75 degree angle from the ground.
 - Raise and lower the ladder from the ground. Ensure that the locking ladder hooks are secure before climbing the ladder.
 - Erect the ladder so that approximately one metre (3 ft) extends above a landing platform. Tie the top of the ladder at support points.
 - Maintain the minimum overlap of sections as noted on the ladder's label.
 - Brace or tie off the ladder near the base. If there is no structure to tie off to, use a stake. Leave the tie-off in place until the ladder is taken down.
 - If your boots are muddy then clean the soles before climbing the ladder.
 - Avoid climbing with wet soles. Ensure your footwear is in good condition.
 - Face the stepladder when climbing up or down. Keep your body centered between the side rails.

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- Maintain a firm grip. Use both hands when climbing. Grasp the rungs.
- Maintain three point contact by keeping two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand on the ladder at all times.

3. Storage and maintenance

- Clean a fibreglass ladder every three months. Spray it lightly with a clear lacquer or paste wax.
- Protect a wooden ladder with a clear sealer or wood preservative.
- Return ladders to the designated storage area after use.
- Store ladders where they are protected from the weather.
- Keep ladders clean and free of foreign materials.
- Keep wooden ladders in a well-ventilated location away from dampness and excessive heat.

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