

# IMPORTANT INFORMATION



SafetyGuidance

# PortableLadders

**> Ladder standards are changing**

**> What does this mean for you?**

**> What action do you need to take?**

The Ladder Association has played an important part in these changes and welcomes the opportunity to introduce clarity to what this means and what happens next.

**[www.ladderassociation.org.uk/en131](http://www.ladderassociation.org.uk/en131)**

# The changes

## How will a ladder be different?

EN 131 has new requirements that will improve the safety of ladders:



Dimensional changes will improve stability



Increased strength test requirements



New requirements for ladder durability

The changes will help to improve the safety of ladders and also make buying the right ladder much simpler.

BS EN 131\* – the single British & European product standard covering all types of portable ladders (step, extending and combination) has been substantially revised. When a European Standard, or Euro Norme (EN) has been agreed and ratified, all CEN member countries are obliged to adopt that Standard as a national standard, in our case, as a British Standard (BS) and withdraw, or amend, any conflicting national standards. So, the British Standards, BS 2037 and BS 1129 (often referred to as Class 1 and Class 3 ladders) now must be amended to remove conflicting products, which means that, after a transition period, certified ladders from these standards will no longer be available.



# When & how?

## How this will affect you



### Timetable

The revised EN 131 standards are now published and manufacturers are in the process of changing over to new designs, which meet the requirements of the revised standard.

Ladders certified to the withdrawn British Standards, BS 2037 and BS 1129 (often referred to as Class 1 and Class 3 ladders) will no longer be available after a transition period.

### Can I still use my existing ladders?

YES, product standards do not apply retrospectively. So, if they are in good condition, there is no immediate requirement to change your existing ladders just because the product standards are revised or withdrawn.

### Business

- > You should consider updating your purchasing policies to be ready to specify EN 131 Professional ladders when your organisation needs to replace existing ladders or buy new ones.

### Domestic

- > When purchasing new ladders or replacing existing ones, you could buy either EN 131 Non-Professional or Professional ladders - it's up to you. Non-Professional ladders should be perfectly adequate but you might want to consider spending a bit extra to buy a Professional ladder.

### Can I still buy ladders to old standards?

During the transition period you will still be able to buy ladders certified to BS 2037, BS 1129 and the superseded EN 131 as suppliers clear their existing stocks and, whilst this is perfectly acceptable, this will diminish over time as supplies are exhausted.

After that, when you need to replace your existing ladders because they are damaged or unfit for further use, or if you need new ladders, then you should buy ladders with third party product conformity certification to the new standard (see page 4 for our buying guide).

# Buying

## How to shop smart



[BS EN 131 is  
the UK's version  
of EN 131]

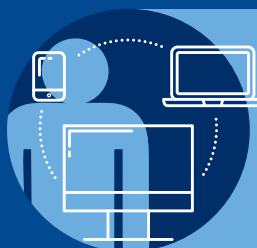
When you need to replace your existing ladders because they are damaged or unfit for further use, or if you need new ladders, be mindful of these top tips to shopping smart.

- ✓ Shop with a reputable company or specialist ladder supplier
- ✓ Check the specification, label and user instructions for details of compliance with the latest version of EN 131

*PLEASE NOTE: During the transition period you will still be able to buy ladders certified to BS 2037 and BS 1129 as suppliers clear their existing stocks and, whilst this is perfectly acceptable, this will diminish over time as supplies are exhausted.*

- ✓ If you are not sure or you want extra reassurance, ask the supplier for confirmation that the ladder meets all the requirements of the current version of EN 131. Ask the supplier for a copy of the certificate of compliance with the EN 131 standard. This certificate should be issued by an accredited test body (such as BSI, TUV, AFNOR etc.)
- ✓ All EN 131 ladders must be sold with the correct safety labels and a set of user instructions containing comprehensive safety information

✗ It is currently NOT possible to legally CE mark a ladder so if you see a ladder with a CE mark, steer clear and don't buy it!



If you're not sure which product is right for you, contact the Ladder Association.

[www.ladderassociation.org.uk/en131](http://www.ladderassociation.org.uk/en131)

# Questions

From changing ladders to retraining

## Wouldn't it just be easier to ban ladders?

No, ladders can often be a sensible and practical option for low-risk and short duration tasks and there are some situations where a ladder may be the only practical possibility. The EN 131 standard will help to ensure that, whilst a ladder may not always be your first option, they remain a viable solution for work at height where alternative forms of access cannot be used.

## What if my company does not want to change ladders?

Well maintained ladders in good condition can still be used. Since it is good practice to specify the latest standard when selecting products, we recommend that companies update their procurement policies at the earliest practical opportunity to be ready for EN 131 implementation.

## Do I need retraining on the new EN 131 ladders?

### Already hold a Ladder Association LadderCard?

You don't need retraining to use the new style ladders (compliant with the new EN 131 standard).

### Not trained?

Ladder Association training equips people to understand the essential points about safe use, handling and storage of ladders, together with potential hazards of their use.

You should make sure that people with sufficient skills, knowledge and experience are employed to perform the task, or, if they are being trained, that they work under the supervision of somebody competent to do it.

### LadderCard

The LadderCard is an effective and widely

recognised way of showing proof of training for work at height from ladders and can help you to demonstrate competence as required by regulations.



# Ladder guidance

Key points to remember

*If it's right to use a ladder, use the right ladder and get trained to use it safely*



Carry out a risk assessment before deciding to use a ladder (other equipment may be more appropriate)



Ladders are suitable for low-risk AND short duration tasks (under 30mins)



Always read the user instructions and the safety labels on the ladder

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Latest news and information



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ASSOCIATION

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# The Ladder Association supports ladder users

The Ladder Association is the not-for-profit industry association dedicated to promoting the safe use of ladders.

We represent all aspects of the industry on standards committees in the UK and Europe and collaborate with the Health & Safety Executive, Hire Association Europe and the Access Industry Forum.

## LadderCard courses available:



**Ladder & Stepladder User Course**



**Ladder & Stepladder Inspection Course**



**Working with Steps & Step Stools**



**For further copies of this document go to:**  
**[www.ladderassociation.org.uk/en131](http://www.ladderassociation.org.uk/en131)**

VERSION 1

*the*  
**LADDER**  
  
**ASSOCIATION**

**[www.ladderassociation.org.uk/en131](http://www.ladderassociation.org.uk/en131)**

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# GET A GRIP

on ladder safety



## Guide to ladder safety

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# GET A GRIP

## on ladder safety essentials

1

### LADDERS ARE PRACTICAL AND VERSATILE

While they may not always be your first choice, there are many situations where a ladder is the most suitable equipment for working at height. Ladders can be appropriate for **low risk** and **short duration** tasks (no longer than 30 minutes).



2

### USE THE RIGHT LADDER

Use a ladder in good condition that meets the new EN 131 professional standard, the previous EN 131 standard, or BS 1129 and BS 2037 (class 1) standards - these ladders are intended for the workplace. Read [our guide](#) to ladder standards for more information.



3

### WORK SAFELY

Make sure your work is planned, organised and that you have undertaken a risk assessment before starting work. Before use, position the ladder correctly, ensuring the ladder is deployed at the correct angle and height, and that the task can be completed without overreaching. Use the belt-buckle test to avoid this. If your belt buckle is outside the sides of the ladder or stepladder, you're overreaching.



4

### COMPETENCE IS FOR EVERYONE

A competent person is someone who has the necessary skills, training and experience at the appropriate level to work at height or supervise someone else working at height. Demonstration of competence is a key requirement of the current Work at Height Regulations. By successfully completing a Ladder Association training course, delegates are awarded a LadderCard. Valid for five years, it is an effective and widely recognised way of showing proof of training for work at height from ladders and can help you to demonstrate competence as required by the Regulations.



# GET A GRIP

## on using a leaning ladder



Assess if it's right to use a ladder. Ladders can be appropriate for **low risk** and **short duration** tasks (no longer than 30 minutes).



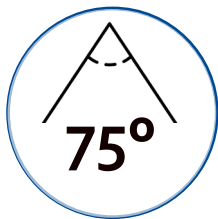
Make sure the ladder is long enough for the task being carried out.



Always read the manufacturer's instruction manual.



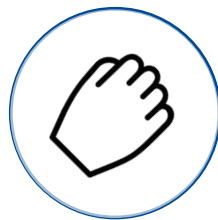
Do not overload. Think about the worker's weight as well as equipment or materials being carried.



Position a leaning ladder at a 75 degree angle



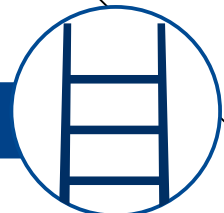
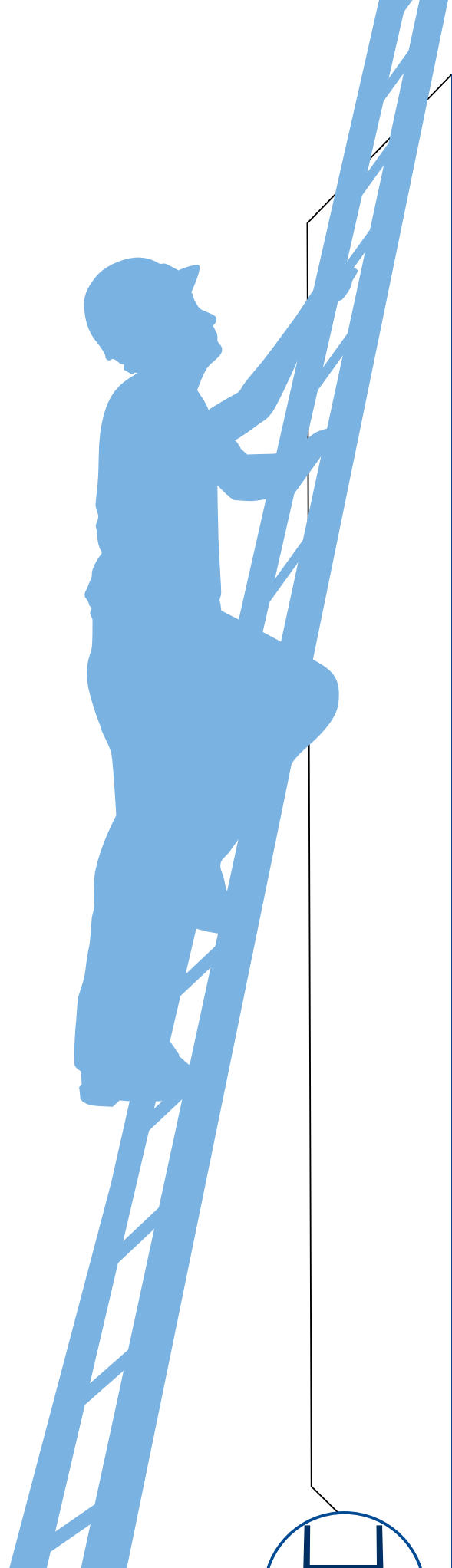
Consider overhead powerlines when working. Consult HSE guidance for more information on minimum safe distances.



Maintain a firm handhold of the ladder. Only let go of a handhold briefly when it's not possible to maintain it for the task, e.g. starting to knock in a nail



You should secure a leaning ladder wherever possible at both top and bottom. If that's not possible, seek advice from the manufacturer on stabilisation. As a last resort, ask another person to foot the ladder. Use a strong upper resting point rather than, for example, plastic gutters.



RECOMMENDED COURSE: LADDERS AND STEPLADDERS FOR USERS

# GET A GRIP

## on ladder inspection

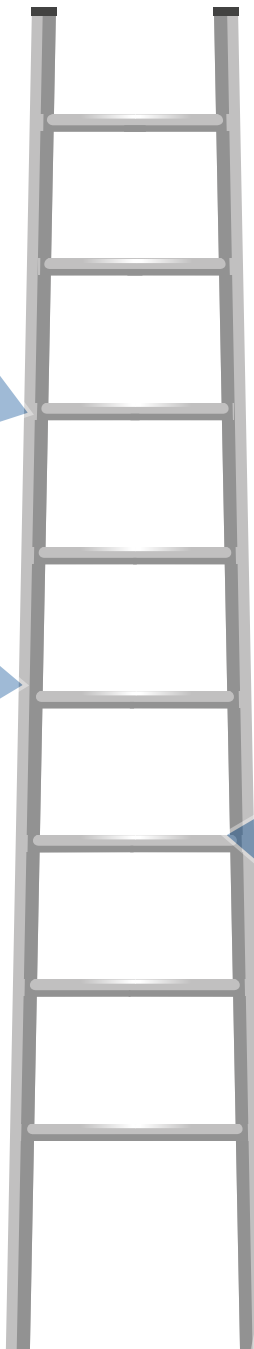
### INSPECTING YOUR LEANING LADDERS

#### Pre-use checks

The aim of a pre-use check is to quickly establish whether a ladder is safe to use NOW. A user must carry out a pre-use check prior to setting up a ladder (this may only need to be done once a day for frequently used ladders).

#### Detailed visual inspections

Detailed inspections of work equipment, as required by Work at Height Regulations, are more in-depth visual and functional inspections than pre-use checks and need to be carried out by competent persons. For example, in a pre-use check you would check that rivets were not missing. In a detailed inspection you would check that rivets were not loose or missing.



Stiles must be in good condition as bent or split stiles could lead to failure

Make sure the locking bars work and are not bent, worn or damaged or the ladder could fail

Confirm the rungs are not bent, missing or loose to keep your ladder stable

Make sure feet are not worn, damaged, dirty or missing, or else the ladder could slip



If your ladder is dirty - clean it. Damage can be hidden beneath all the dirt, and the dirt itself can cause the ladder to slip or you to slip from the ladder.



# GET A GRIP

## on using a stepladder



Assess if it's right to use a ladder. Ladders can be appropriate for **low risk** and **short duration** tasks (no longer than 30 minutes).



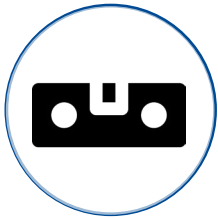
Be careful of the dangers of side-on loading, like drilling from the side. Aim to be facing the work. Where side-on loadings cannot be avoided, you should prevent the steps from tipping over, e.g by tying the steps



Always read the manufacturer's instruction manual



Ensure that the restraining strap/bar is deployed and locks correctly.



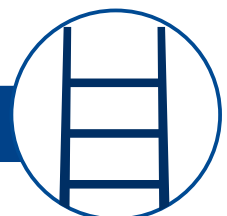
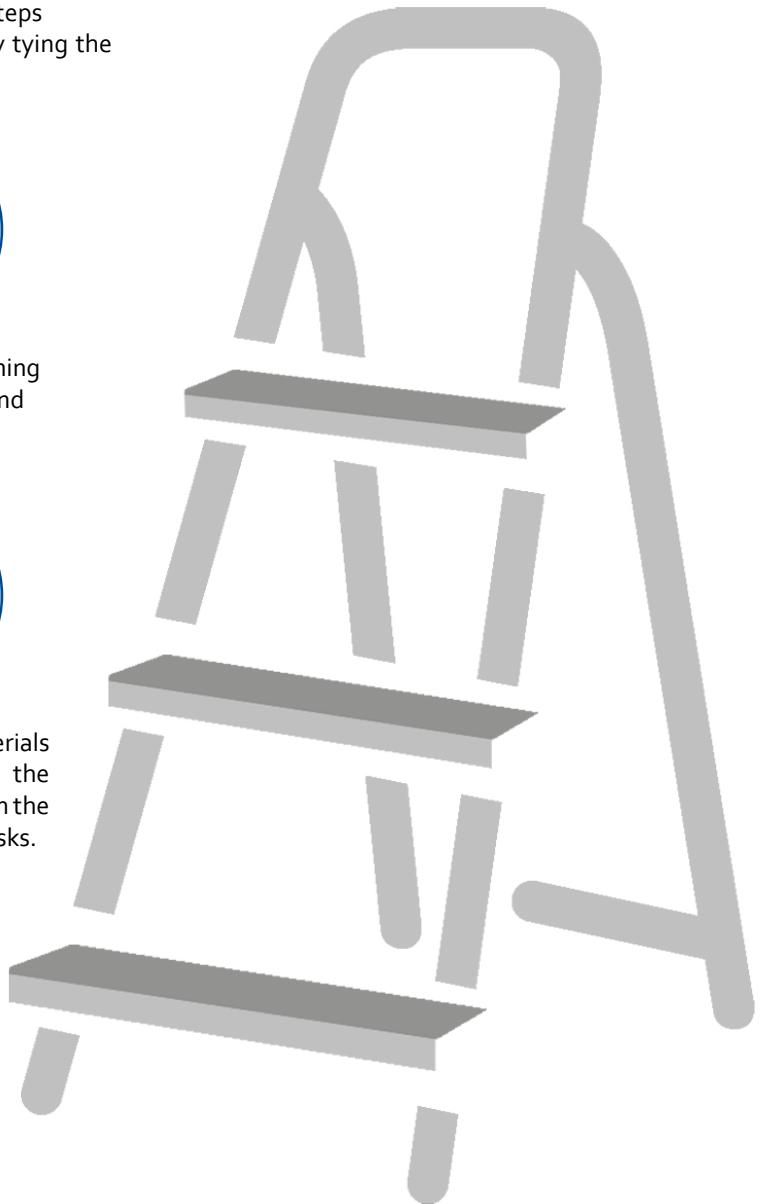
Check all four feet of the stepladder – they must all be in contact with the ground, and the steps should be level.



only carry light materials and tools – read the manufacturers' labels on the ladder and assess the risks.



Maintain a firm handhold of the ladder. Only let go of a handhold briefly when it's not possible to maintain it for the task, e.g. starting to knock in a nail



# GET A GRIP

## on stepladder inspection

### INSPECTING YOUR STEPLADDERS

#### Pre-use checks

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on ladder safety



## Guide to ladder training

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# GET A GRIP

## on ladder training

### ABOUT OUR TRAINING

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The Ladder Association operates an industry standard training scheme that is delivered through approved and audited training centres across the UK.

Lasting no more than a day, Ladder Association training equips people to:

- Identify hazards and minimise risk using the STEP methodology
- Assess and determine when it is appropriate to use ladders and stepladders
- Correctly position and safely use ladders and stepladders
- Carry out the inspection and maintenance of ladders and stepladders



### TRAINING, COMPETENCE AND REGULATIONS

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It is a legal requirement to conduct all work at height in accordance with the Work at Height Regulations 2005.

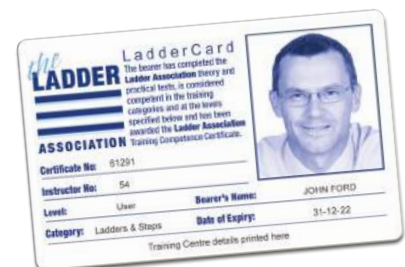
The Regulations, which concentrates on risk management through proper risk assessment, applicable to the wide range of work activities carried out at height, states:

- Ladders can be used for access and egress
- Ladders can be used to work from
- Ladders are legal where the task (or series of tasks) is of low risk and short duration (under 30 minutes)

You should make sure that people with sufficient skills, knowledge and experience are employed to perform the task, or, if they are being trained, that they work under the supervision of somebody competent.

Competence can be demonstrated through a variety of means including practical and theoretical knowledge, training and experience.

Upon completing a Ladder Association training course, delegates will be awarded a LadderCard, which represents demonstrable proof that users are trained to work at height from a ladder and can help to evidence the competence required by the Regulations.



**FIND YOUR NEAREST TRAINING CENTRE TODAY**



# GET A GRIP

## on ladder training

### ABOUT OUR COURSES

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#### LADDERS & STEPLADDERS FOR USERS COURSE

This is our main course for anyone who regularly uses ladders or stepladders as part of their daily work. It consists of practical and theory assessments and covers when and how to use a ladder, handling and storage, understanding the law, standards, and potential hazards.

#### LADDERS & STEPLADDERS INSPECTION COURSE

The inspection course is aimed at anyone who may be responsible for inspecting and maintaining ladders or stepladders in their workplace. It is as comprehensive as the Ladder & Stepladder User course, and covers practical guidance on assessing the need for inspection, fault-finding and recommending actions, record keeping, as well as the law.

Delegates can also choose to do a combined User and Inspection course. Lasting a full day, it will teach delegates everything listed above on the use and inspection of ladders and stepladders.

#### STEPS & STEP STOOLS FOR USERS COURSE

This course is aimed at more occasional users of stepladders and step stools – those working in shops, offices, schools, hospitals and other sectors where using this equipment to access height is infrequent. It provides essential information about safe use, standards, hazards and the law.



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SafetyGuidance

# TelescopicLadders

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accidents don't have to happen

[www.ladderassociation.org.uk/guidance](http://www.ladderassociation.org.uk/guidance)

# Buying

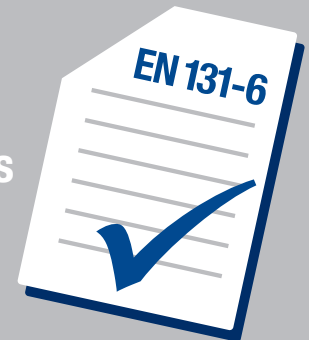
## How to shop smart for telescopic ladders

### Shop with a reputable company or specialist ladder supplier

The price of a good telescopic ladder is inevitably higher than some of the cheap and unsafe products, but the cost to you and to your health will be much greater if an accident occurs because of using an inferior and unsafe ladder.



Make sure the ladder conforms to EN 131 – 6



- ✓ Check the telescopic ladder meets European product standard, EN 131 – 6 (or an equivalent standard), by checking the specification, labelling, and user instructions. If you are not sure, or you want extra reassurance, then you can always ask the supplier for a copy of their certificate of compliance with the standard issued by an accredited test body (such as BSI or TUV). If they cannot provide you with a certificate, then you need to think carefully about buying the ladder.
- ✗ Steer clear of any ladder with a CE mark - not only is it impossible to CE mark a ladder – it is illegal. A genuine ladder would **never** have a CE mark so it is a good indication that something is wrong!



# Using

## How to safely use telescopic ladders

Before you decide to use any type of ladder you need to consider if the task you are carrying out is both low risk and short duration. If it's not, then don't use a ladder.



### Check the ladder every time before you use it and inspect it thoroughly at intervals

Telescopic ladders have significantly more safety critical parts than ordinary ladders and therefore need more careful pre-use checks and more rigorous thorough inspections at more frequent intervals.

Telescopic ladders can be damaged by impact or through poor conditions of transport, use or storage.

- > Before you use it for the first time, inspect the ladder thoroughly – it may have been damaged before you bought or hired it, or during shipment.
- > If the ladder is dropped, or following any event which may have similarly jeopardised its safety, then you should carry out a thorough inspection before you use the ladder again.
- > If any of the tubes forming the sides of the ladder are damaged, then the ladder may be difficult to operate and may not lock properly. Damage to the sides or rungs can create a weakness that may result in a ladder failing under load.
- > "If you find anything which is damaged or not working exactly as it should, or which you are just not sure about, then **DON'T USE THE LADDER** – contact the supplier for advice.



### Make sure you read the instructions **BEFORE** you use the ladder

This is vital, particularly for a telescopic ladder, as you need to fully understand the instructions for extending and closing; otherwise, you may end up with trapped fingers or the ladder collapsing in use.

- > Not all telescopic ladders work in the same way. Don't assume you know how to use one just because you have used another telescopic ladder before.
- > All ladders conforming to EN 131-6 must be supplied with a full set of user instructions. If you don't have them, then contact the supplier and ask for a replacement set.

## All the basic rules for ladder use apply just the same to telescopic ladders.

Before deciding to use a ladder, always carry out a risk assessment (considering the hierarchy of measures for working at height) to ensure a telescopic ladder is appropriate for the job

Read the user instructions and the safety labels on the ladder and check the weight rating.

Carry out a pre-use check.

Don't use a ladder in bad weather, if you feel unwell, after drinking alcohol or taking medication.

Extend the ladder following the user instructions – this particularly applies to the sequence for opening and where you should position your hands. Trapped fingers can be very painful!

Check that all locking mechanisms have operated correctly and that each extended section is properly locked at both ends of the rung. Don't climb the ladder if the sections are in the wrong position or if the gaps between the rungs of the extended sections are not the same.

If you are not sure, then **DON'T USE THE LADDER.**

Position the ladder at the correct angle (75 degrees for a leaning ladder) and make sure it is the right way up and facing the right way (some telescopic ladders have a front and back and must be used the right way around). Never use the ladder horizontally as a bridge or to support something.

Don't forget to tie the ladder to prevent it from moving. If you cannot tie it, use an effective stabilising device designed for use with a telescopic ladder.

Never tamper with or attempt to adjust the locking mechanisms whilst working on the ladder.

Close the ladder following the user instructions – pay attention to the sequence for closing and where you should position your hands.

Extend and close telescopic ladders slowly and carefully to avoid damaging the locking mechanisms.

Find more useful information on the following web pages:

- > Using a ladder
- > Inspecting a ladder
- > LadderSolve
- > Other resources

# Maintenance, care and storage

## How to keep your telescopic ladder in good condition

Because a telescopic ladder has more safety critical moving parts, they need to be looked after and stored in good conditions. If they are not, this can quickly cause the ladder to fail.



- > Follow any specific care directions in the user instructions.
- > Keep telescopic ladders clean – wipe them with a clean dry cloth.
- > Keep them dry as damp conditions can adversely affect their condition and operation.
- > Don't use the ladder in dirty or dusty environments.
- > Paint, plaster and other contaminants should be wiped off before they dry and before closing the ladder sections.



- > Do not lubricate the sections of ladder unless it is specified in the user instructions.
- > If lubrication is advised in the instructions, then you must use the lubricant specified.



- > Never attempt to dismantle or repair telescopic ladders. There are no repairable parts inside. If the feet of the ladder need to be replaced, contact the supplier for advice.



- > Store telescopic ladders in a clean and dry environment and sheltered from the elements. Make sure nothing is stacked on top of the ladder. This also applies when transporting telescopic ladders.



[www.ladderassociation.org.uk/guidance](http://www.ladderassociation.org.uk/guidance)

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