

## HOW TO... CHECK & INSPECT YOUR LADDER

### What is the risk?

Employers need to ensure ladders and stepladders are in a safe condition before use, and that regular inspections are carried out by a competent person. As a guide, only use ladders or stepladders that:

- **Have no visible defects.** They should have a pre-use check each working day;
- **Have an up-to-date record of the detailed visual inspections carried out regularly by a competent person.** These should be done in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Ladders that are part of a scaffold system still have to be inspected every seven days as part of the scaffold inspection requirements;
- **Are suitable for the intended use,** i.e. are strong and robust enough for the job;
- **Have been maintained and stored** in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

### Pre-Use Checks - to make sure the ladder is safe to use NOW

Before starting a task, you should have access to user instructions from the manufacturer in case you need to refer to them. **Always carry out a 'pre-use' check** to spot any obvious visual defects to make sure the ladder is safe to use. A pre-use check doesn't need to be recorded, but should be carried out:

- By the user;
- At the beginning of the working day;
- After something has changed, e.g. a ladder has been dropped or moved from a dirty area to a clean area (check the state or condition of the feet).

The check should include: the stiles, feet, rungs, locking mechanism, platform (for stepladders), and steps or treads on stepladders.

**If you spot any defects, do NOT use the ladder and notify your employer!**



### Detailed Visual Inspections - to make sure the ladder is safe for continued use

Detailed visual inspections are the responsibility of the employer. They should be carried out by a competent person, at fixed intervals, properly planned using a ladder register, and recorded. Records of these inspections provide a snapshot of the state of the ladders over time.

**This is a requirement of the Work at Height Regulations and is in addition to pre-use checks!**

When doing an inspection, look for:

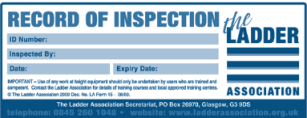
- Damaged or worn ladder feet;
- Twisted, bent or dented stiles;
- Cracked, worn, bent or loose rungs;
- Missing or damaged tie rods;
- Cracked or damaged welded joints;
- Loose rivets;
- Damaged stays.

**As a guide, for ladders used and stored in good conditions, they should be inspected as follows:**

Level of use	Inspection schedule (at a minimum)
Frequent (on a daily basis)	Every 3 months
Occasional (on a weekly basis)	Every 6 months
Infrequent (less than monthly)	Every 12 months

### What else do I need to know?

- Pre-use checks and inspections of ladder stability devices and other accessories should be performed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- In between scheduled inspections, you may also need to do interim inspections if a risk assessment has identified significant risks that could result in deterioration in the condition of the ladder.
- If you own a number of ladders, it's a good idea keep a register to help you organise and plan inspections and maintenance.
- Affix a label to your ladders to provide users with a useful visual indicator of its inspection status (see example right).



### 5 KEY POINTS:

1. Carry out a pre-use check to spot any obvious defects
2. Carry out detailed visual inspections at required intervals
3. Consider the need for interim inspections
4. Keep a ladder register to help organise and plan inspections (and any maintenance)
5. Get trained to inspect ladders & stepladders correctly.

### Who needs to know:

- Anyone whose duty is to inspect and maintain ladders/stepladders at work.

### Useful references:

- LA455 'Safe Use of Ladders and Stepladders: A brief guide'
- Ladder Association Code of Practice (Sections 14 & 26)
- Ladder Association Training: [ladderassociation.org.uk/training](http://ladderassociation.org.uk/training)

