

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.

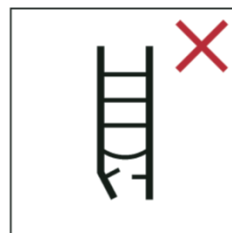
Pre-Use Checks - to make sure the ladder is safe to use NOW

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

