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TOOLBOX TALK

Produced by the Access Industry Forum (AIF) and the Ladder Association, and supported by the Home Builders Federation.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Toolbox Talks are NOT intended to replace formal training but to supplement it.

HOW TO...
SECURE YOUR LADDER

What is the risk?

Ladders can be a sensible and practical option for low risk and short duration tasks. Setting a ladder up correctly to start with will help you stay safe when working at height, but it's important you also secure your ladder to help prevent it from slipping or moving while in use.

What are the options for securing a ladder?

There are four main ways you can secure your ladder. In order of priority, these are:

1. **Tying in** - tie the ladder to a suitable secure point, making sure both stiles are tied. You can tie in at the top or near the base, or both.
2. **Use a ladder stability device** - when used correctly, these devices may help to prevent a ladder from slipping. Speak to the ladder manufacturer for further guidance before using such a device.
3. **Wedging your ladder** - if it's not possible to tie a ladder and you can't find a suitable stability device, the next option to you is to securely wedge your ladder (e.g. wedge the stiles against a wall). But remember to position it at the correct angle and close to the work to avoid over reaching.
4. **Footing** - if you can't use any of the options above, foot the ladder. Footing is the **last resort** as it is the least effective way of preventing a ladder slipping.

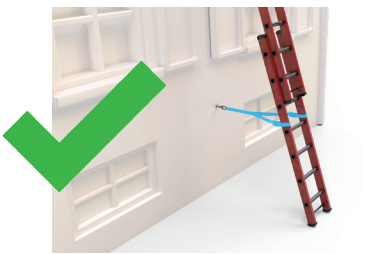
Tying in - the basics

Tying in is the first, most effective and preferred option for preventing a ladder from slipping:

- Make sure the ties are strong enough for the task; strong rope, webbing straps, certain nylon ties or purpose-made devices are good options. Be careful with some synthetic ropes, they can weaken over time and with exposure to the sun.
- Ties should be tight enough to sufficiently prevent movement of the ladder, but they shouldn't be over-tightened as that puts extra load on the ladder and could cause the ladder or stepladder to be overloaded and break.
- Always fix the ties around both sides of the ladder and never tie onto a rung or tread.
- Only tie-in to a secure fixing. This could be existing features (as long as you know they're secure), or you might need to fit anchors to tie into, or you could drive stakes into solid and firm ground to create tie-off points. Whatever you do, DO NOT tie into, or rest the ladder against, weak surfaces like plastic guttering, drainpipes or glazing.
- There may be times when you need to tie in a stepladder - before you do, ask yourself if it's the most appropriate choice of equipment for the job. If yes, fix the ties carefully, and never tie onto a tread.

CORRECT - tied at top stiles

CORRECT - tying near base



Footing - your options

Footing is of limited benefit for stabilising a ladder, but we know it's commonplace. If no other securing methods are available and you must foot the ladder, use either of these two options:

- **Option 1** - one foot in the centre of the bottom rung, with the other foot behind you on the ground, and hands firmly on each stile at shoulder height.
- **Option 2** - each foot hard against each stile, with hands firmly on each stile at shoulder height.
- Do not stand on the bottom rung with both feet.

5 KEY POINTS:

1. Secure your ladder at all times
2. Tying in is the preferred option
3. If you can't tie in, use a ladder stability device
4. Only wedge the ladder if tying in or stability devices are not possible
5. Footing is always the last resort

Who needs to know:

- Anyone who uses ladders and stepladders on site
- Managers and site supervisors

Useful references:

- LA455 'Safe Use of Ladders and Stepladders: A brief guide'
- Ladder Association Code of Practice

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