



West Berkshire  
Countryside Society

# WBCS – Use of ladders

## Recommendations and safe practice notes.

Based on HSE ING402 & 405 and BTCV Ladders RA

Prepared March 2013

### 1. Set up for leaning ladders

- ❑ Do a pre-use check, feet and rungs undamaged.
- ❑ Secure it – tied at the top and footed at bottom.
- ❑ Ground should be firm and level – recommend using a board on soft ground to spread the load.
- ❑ Max safe ground slope – 16° (figure 3)
- ❑ Level if needed using boards not loose logs
- ❑ Maximum back slope - 6° (figure 3)

### 2. Leaning ladders in use

- ❑ Short duration work – maximum 30 minutes
- ❑ Light loads only – up to 10kg (bucket of water?)
- ❑ Ladder angle 75° 1 in 4 rule (1 unit out for every 4 units up – fig. 10)
- ❑ Always grip ladder when climbing
- ❑ Observe the “three points of contact” rule.
- ❑ Do not overreach – make sure your belt buckle (navel) stays within the stiles. (fig 1a & 1b)
- ❑ Keep both feet on the rungs of the ladder
- ❑ Avoid standing on the top three rungs – these provide a handhold.

### 3. Step and folding ladders

- ❑ Do a pre-use check, feet and rungs undamaged.
- ❑ Check and use locking devices

### 4. Step and folding ladders in use

- ❑ Short duration work – 30 minutes
- ❑ Light loads only – max 10kg
- ❑ Do not overreach, avoid side-on working (fig 2a)
- ❑ Do not work off the top two steps unless you have a safe handhold on the steps.
- ❑ Do not work off the top three steps or platform of a swing-back double-sided stepladder.
- ❑ Both feet on same step throughout the task

### 5. PPE

- ❑ Recommend helmets used – essential for those working directly below it.
- ❑ Other PPE - gloves, goggles etc. - judgement needed dependant on task

**NB Scaffold towers** – should not be used. A trained PASMA cardholder is required for work with towers.

### 6. Risk assessment points

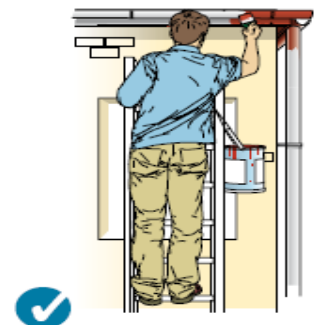
- ❑ Condition of ladder?
- ❑ Possible contact with powerlines?
- ❑ Setting up the ladder?
- ❑ Uneven ground or unbalanced ladder?
- ❑ Carrying tools and materials up and down ladder?
- ❑ Overreaching?
- ❑ Unexpected movement of ladder?

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**Figure 1a** Incorrect - overreaching and not maintaining three points of contact

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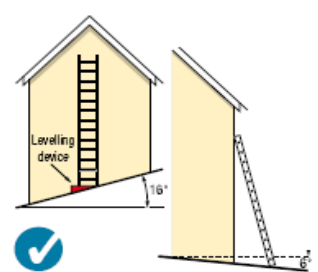
**Figure 1b** Correct - user maintaining three points of contact

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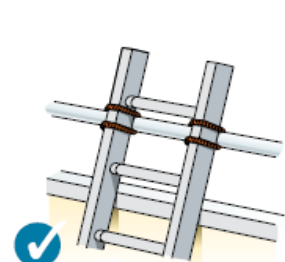
**Figure 2a** Incorrect - steps side-on to work activity

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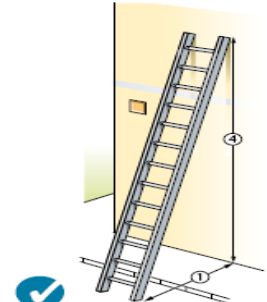
**Figure 3** Ladder showing maximum angles at 16° on a side slope and 6° on a back slope

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**Figure 4** Ladder tied at top stiles (correct for working on, not for access)

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**Figure 10** Ladder showing correct 1 in 4 angle (means of securing omitted for clarity)