ENVIRONMENTAL, HEALTH & SAFETY OFFICE

SUBJECT

Safe Use of Portable Ladders

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to establish good, safe practices in the use and care of portable ladders.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to all portable ladders owned by Sam Houston State University (SHSU) or used on university properties by university employees, contractors and students.

III. GENERAL INFORMATION

A secure, well made ladder is necessary for safe ladder use. Ladders come in different styles, including step, straight, and extension. They also vary in construction and may consist of wood, aluminum, or fiberglass. All ladders sold within the U.S. are rated as follows:

- Type IA - Heavy-duty industrial ladder rated to hold up to 300 pounds.
- Type II - Medium-duty commercial ladder rated to hold up to 225 pounds.
- Type III - Light-duty household ladder rated to hold up to 200 pounds.

VI. REQUIREMENTS

General Requirements:

- Ladders purchased by SHSU shall be Type IA Heavy-duty industrial ladders.
- Type II Medium-duty ladders may be purchased and used by SHSU personnel if the following conditions are met:
  - The ladder is assigned to a specific person.
  - The ladder will not be exposed to a combined weight of person, tools and equipment that will exceed 225 pounds.
- Portable ladders shall have nonconductive side rails if they are used by a craft that works on electrical circuits.
- Choose the correct type and size ladder for the job.
- Always inspect a ladder before you climb it to ensure it is in useable condition.

Care of Ladders:
• If a ladder falls over, inspect ladder for side rails dents or bends, or excessively dented rungs; check all rung-to-side-rail connections; check hardware connections; check rivets for shear.
• Ladders having defects are to be removed from service until repaired by the manufacturer.
• Ladders that cannot be repaired shall be destroyed.
• If ladders are exposed to oil and grease, equipment should be cleaned of oil, grease, or slippery materials.
• Store ladders away from heat and moisture.
• All manufacturer’s labels and warnings shall be visible and legible.

Requirements for Safe Ladder Use:

• **Watch for overhead power lines and obstructions.**
  • Do not stand on the top four rungs of an extension ladder, the top two rungs of a step ladder or the pail shelf.
  • Place ladders on a solid, level surface.
  • To prevent ladders from sinking into soft ground, use a large board under the feet of the ladder.
  • Use a ladder made of non-conductive materials, i.e. wood, fiberglass or plastic, if you must work near electrical sources.
  • Do not place a ladder in front of a door unless you lock and barricade the door or post a warning sign on the opposite side of the door.
  • Wear shoes with slip-resistant soles and make sure they are dry before climbing.
  • Never allow more than one person on a ladder.
  • To climb or descend a ladder, face the ladder and firmly grip the rails, not the rungs, with both hands.
  • Keep your body between the rails at all times. Do not shift your weight to one side.
  • Have somebody steady the ladder if it cannot be secured otherwise.
  • When working on a ladder, keep two feet and one hand on the ladder at all times.
  • When working on a ladder, carry small tools on a tool belt. Use a rope to raise and lower heavy tools.
  • Never leave a raised or open ladder unattended.
  • Ladders must not be tied or fastened together to provide longer sections. They must be equipped with the hardware fittings necessary if the manufacturer endorses extended uses.
  • Ladders should not be used as a scaffold board, brace, skid, guy or gin pole, gangway, or for other uses than that for which they were intended.
  • To open a stepladder, make sure the spreader is locked and the pail shelf is in position. To open an extension ladder, brace the bottom end and push the rungs or rails up.
  • Position a straight or extension ladder so that the base of the ladder is one foot away from the vertical support for every four feet of working ladder height (e.g., if you are working with eight feet of ladder, place the base of the ladder two feet from the wall).
  • Do not place the top of a ladder against a window or an uneven surface.
  • When possible, tie the top of a straight or extension ladder to supports. Stake and tie the feet of the ladder.
  • An extension ladder used for access to a roof must extend at least 3 feet beyond the support point.
  • Use two people to move or position ladders when needed.