# SWM-08. Safe Use of Ladders SWMS

**ACWA: Safe Work Method – Safe Use of Ladders**

**Note:** This Safe Work Method only provides guidance information and may not necessarily cover all possible hazards and should be used with other references

**Date: August/2023.**

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| Risk Assessment | |
| **Hazard** | **Risk** |
| Working at height | * Injury from fall |
| Damaged ladder | * Injury from ladder malfunction |
| Unsecured ladder | * Injury from fall |
| Slips | * Injury from fall |

## Pre-Check

* Always select the appropriate ladder for the work to be performed. Do not use a metal ladder for electrical work,
* Always inspect the ladder for loose or damaged rungs, steps, rails, and braces,
* Ensure stepladder spreaders are sturdy and can be locked in place,
* Prior to ascending the ladder, check that all rungs, steps, and soles of shoes are free of any slippery material,
* Ensure the ladder is fitted with slip-resistant feet that are in good order,
* Appropriate rubber-soled footwear (non-slip) should be worn,
* Ensure the ladder meets Australian Standards and is rated for industrial use,
* If necessary, advise workers in the immediate area when about to use the ladder,
* Ensure the work area is clear of obstructions,
* Make sure lighting is sufficient in the immediate work area.

## Ladder Use

* Place the ladder on a firm, flat surface, ensuring the feet are level. A board may be necessary to ensure it is level or to prevent the feet from sinking into a soft surface,
* If there is a risk that the ladder may slip at the bottom, use another worker to brace the ladder or implement the use of a prop to support the ladder,
* Always keep the area around the base of the ladder uncluttered,
* Make sure that the locking device is fully secured on an extension ladder before use,
* When using a stepladder, make certain it is fully open with the spreader securely. Locked,
* A straight ladder should be long enough for the job and should project at least 900mm above the level of the point of support, with both railings resting on firm support,
* Where possible, extension ladders should be firmly secured or anchored at the top before performing any work, e.g., ladder anchor,
* Never place a ladder in doorways or traffic areas without protective barriers or an additional person to function as a spotter,
* Never stand on the top two rungs of a ladder,
* Use the "4 to 1" rule with straight ladders. This simply means that the ladder should be placed 250mm away from the base for every one metre in height to the place where the top of the ladder rests,
* Unless a ladder is designed for additional weight, only one person should be on the ladder,
* Go up and down a ladder facing the ladder, taking only one step at a time. Hold the stiles with both hands. Always maintain at least three points of contact when working from a ladder,
* NEVER over-reach upwards or sideways when working on ladders. Keep your body centred between the rails,
* NEVER use ladders during strong winds or storms except in emergencies, and only when securely anchored.

## Report Faults

* Tag the ladder if faulty so it can only be used once fixed.