



LADDER SAFETY

Selection, Inspection, Setup, Access and Use

POLICY STANDARD

Use a ladder only when it is the appropriate access or work method. Select the correct ladder, inspect and secure it, control surrounding hazards, and maintain a safe climbing position. Use stairs, scaffolds or aerial lifts when they provide safer access or a stable work platform.

PHEIFER BROTHERS CONSTRUCTION CO., INC.

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USE OF THIS POLICY

This policy states minimum company expectations and is not all-inclusive. Manufacturer instructions, project conditions and applicable scaffold, fall-protection, excavation, electrical or water-work requirements may require a different access method or added controls.

Primary Regulatory References

- 29 CFR 1926 Subpart X - Stairways and Ladders
- 29 CFR 1926.1053 - Ladders
- 29 CFR 1926.1060 - Training requirements
- 29 CFR 1926.651(c) - Trench access and egress
- 29 CFR 1926.802 - Cofferdam rapid-exit requirements

Official standards: www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1926/1926.1053 and www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1926/1926.1060

1. Purpose, Scope and Responsibilities

Purpose and Scope

This policy applies to portable, extension, stepladder, platform, fixed and job-made ladders used at shops, yards and heavy-highway/bridge projects. It also covers ladder access to forms, scaffolds, excavations, cofferdams, barges and temporary work areas. Ladders are primarily access devices and are suitable only for short-duration, light-duty work that can be performed from a stable position.

Management / Project Management

- Provide ladders of the correct type, length, duty rating, material and condition.
- Provide stairs, scaffolds, aerial lifts or engineered access when ladders are not appropriate.
- Ensure competent-person training, inspections and corrective resources are available.
- Coordinate ladder access with fall protection, excavations, cofferdams, traffic, electricity and rescue planning.

Foremen / Competent Persons

- Select/approve the access method during planning and verify ladder setup before exposure.
- Inspect ladders and surrounding conditions; remove defective equipment and stop unsafe use.
- Control traffic, doors, equipment, weather, landing and edge hazards.
- Retrain employees and document required inspections or corrective actions.

Employees

- Use ladders only when trained and authorized and only for their designed purpose.
- Inspect before use; follow labels and manufacturer instructions.
- Face the ladder, maintain safe contact/body position and keep hands available for climbing.
- Report defects or changed conditions and stop when setup or use cannot remain safe.

STOP-WORK AUTHORITY

Any employee may stop ladder use when the ladder, setup, environment or task is unsafe. Work resumes only after correction and reassessment.

2. Selection, Inspection and Defective Ladders

Select for the Task

CONSIDERATION	REQUIREMENT
Type	Use straight/extension for access; stepladder/platform ladder for self-supported use; fixed/job-made only when compliant.
Length	Reach the work/landing without standing on prohibited steps, overextending sections or placing a ladder on boxes/equipment.
Duty rating	Total employee, clothing, tools and materials must not exceed the rated load.
Material	Use nonconductive ladders where electrical contact is possible; metal ladders are prohibited near exposed energized parts.
Environment	Account for mud, ice, water, wind, traffic, vibration, doors, edges and overhead hazards.
Task	Use scaffold/lift when work requires force, heavy materials, extended duration, both hands or movement outside the rails.

Pre-Use Inspection

- Side rails, rungs/steps, feet, shoes, spreaders, locks, rope, pulleys, hooks and hardware.
- Cracks, bends, splits, corrosion, missing/loose parts and damaged fiberglass.
- Oil, grease, mud, ice, wet concrete, paint or other contamination.
- Duty-rating, warning and manufacturer labels; field modifications or makeshift repairs.
- Fixed-ladder anchorage, connections, climbing clearance, landings, gates and fall-protection components.

Defective Ladders

- Immediately tag 'DO NOT USE' or otherwise control against use and remove from the work area.
- Do not repair with wire, tape, bolts, welding, sistered rails or replacement parts unless performed under manufacturer-approved procedures by an authorized person.
- Destroy/dispose of ladders that cannot be safely restored so they cannot return to service.
- A competent person must reassess any ladder involved in impact, fall, electrical contact or chemical/heat damage.

INSPECT EVERY USE

A prior shift's inspection does not replace the current user's inspection of the ladder and setup.

3. General Use, Setup and Positioning

Setup

- Place on a stable, level, firm and non-slippery base; do not use boxes, loose blocks, buckets or equipment to gain height.
- Secure against displacement by tying, blocking, stabilizers or another effective method. Secure the top where practical and the base when needed.
- Keep top and bottom access clear; protect from doors, traffic, equipment and public access with locks, barricades, spotters or relocation.
- Do not set on scaffolds, platforms or vehicles unless the ladder and supporting system are specifically designed for that use.
- Keep required clearances from unprotected edges, openings, suspended loads and overhead power.

Climbing and Use

- Face the ladder when ascending, descending and working.
- Maintain three points of control while climbing and a stable working position; keep the belt buckle/torso between side rails.
- Use both hands for climbing. Carry small tools in a belt or hoist materials with a hand line.
- Wear clean, slip-resistant footwear; clean muddy or oily rungs before use.
- Only one person uses a ladder unless it is specifically designed/rated for more.
- Do not move, shift or extend a ladder while occupied; never slide down rails.
- Do not use the back side, braces or cross-bracing for climbing unless designed as steps.

Safe Work Position

- Reposition rather than lean, twist or stand sideways.
- Do not use a ladder as a plank, brace, skid, workbench, ramp or horizontal platform.
- Avoid side loading, pulling, pushing or tool reaction that could overturn the ladder.
- Protect the landing transition; do not step around an unguarded edge without required protection.

THREE POINTS

Three-point control is essential while climbing. Working posture must remain stable; if the task requires both hands, force or reaching, use a safer platform.

4. Straight and Extension Ladders

Access to an Upper Landing

- Extend side rails at least 3 feet above the landing. If impossible, secure the ladder at the top to a rigid support and provide a grasping device for mounting/dismounting.
- Ensure the step-across is safe, clear and within the protected landing area.
- Do not step from a ladder onto a surface that lacks required guardrails/fall protection.

Setup Angle and Securement

- Set non-self-supporting ladders near a 4:1 ratio: the base about 1 foot out for every 4 feet of working length to the upper support.
- Place both rails on sound upper support and secure to prevent slipping, kicking out or sideways movement.
- Do not use horizontal surfaces as upper supports unless they can carry the load and prevent movement.

Extension-Ladder Rules

- Maintain manufacturer-required section overlap; do not exceed maximum extended length or separate sections.
- Engage both rung locks and inspect rope/pulley condition before climbing.
- Raise/lower from the ground with the ladder unoccupied and clear of electrical lines, traffic and people.
- Never climb above the highest level permitted by manufacturer labels.
- Do not tie or splice ladders together to create additional length.
- When two ladders serve the same landing, position them so traffic between ladders does not create a fall or collision hazard.

Tying and Assistance

- A person holding the base is temporary assistance, not a substitute for required securement.
- Use approved levelers, hooks or stabilizers only when compatible and installed per manufacturer instructions.
- Barricade the base when setup projects into a walkway or work area.

3 FEET / 4 TO 1

Access ladders extend 3 feet above the landing; straight and extension ladders are generally positioned at approximately a 4:1 angle.

5. Stepladders, Platform Ladders and Electrical Hazards

Stepladders

- Fully open the ladder and lock all spreaders before use.
- Do not lean a closed stepladder against a surface unless the manufacturer specifically designs and labels it for that use.
- Never stand on the top or top step of a stepladder. Follow labels for the highest standing level.
- Do not climb rear braces unless designed and labeled for climbing.
- Do not straddle the front/rear or transition between ladders.
- Keep all feet level and supported; do not use makeshift leg extensions.

Platform and Podium Ladders

- Use only with the platform, gate/rail and locking system fully deployed.
- Stand only on the intended platform and remain within the surrounding rails.
- Do not climb above the platform or use rails as steps.
- Do not move a rolling unit while occupied; lock casters and verify the unit is stable.

Electrical Hazards

- Use nonconductive fiberglass ladders where employees or ladders could contact exposed energized parts.
- Metal ladders may not be used near energized electrical conductors or equipment.
- Maintain required approach distances from overhead lines; use spotters and preplanned routes when moving long ladders.
- Carry ladders horizontally only when the route is clear; use two people when length/weight or conditions require it.
- Remove a ladder involved in electrical contact from service until evaluated.
- Fiberglass reduces conductivity but does not make unsafe electrical contact acceptable, especially when wet or contaminated.

LOOK UP BEFORE MOVING

Long ladders can contact overhead power even when not being climbed. Survey the entire handling and setup route first.

6. Bridge, Highway and Work-Zone Use

Bridge and Elevated Work

- Select ladder length/setup so employees do not climb from an unstable slope, form, rebar mat, beam, pier cap or narrow member.
- Provide safe protected transition to decks, platforms and scaffolds.
- Secure against wind, vibration, crane movement, traffic impact and uneven concrete/steel surfaces.
- Control dropped tools/materials and prevent people from working below ladder operations.
- Use required fall protection at exposed landings or adjacent unprotected edges; a portable ladder does not serve as an anchorage unless specifically designed.

Live Traffic and Internal Equipment

- Do not set ladders in open travel lanes, haul routes or equipment paths unless an approved closure and physical protection are in place.
- Use the traffic-control plan, barriers/channelizing devices, spotters and lighting appropriate to the exposure.
- Never rely only on high-visibility apparel to protect a ladder user from moving vehicles.
- Keep ladder rails, feet and the employee outside equipment swing radii and blind spots.
- Relocate ladders before traffic patterns, crane operations or deliveries create a conflict.

Doors, Public Access and Simultaneous Work

- Lock or guard doors that could strike the ladder; do not rely on a warning sign alone where entry remains possible.
- Barricade the area beneath/around the ladder against coworkers and the public.
- Coordinate with concrete placement, rigging, welding, cutting, demolition and other operations that create vibration, heat, sparks or falling-object exposure.
- Use illumination that makes ladder rungs, base and landing visible without glare.

POSITIVE PROTECTION

A ladder user has limited ability to escape. Separate ladder work from live traffic and mobile equipment with effective physical and operational controls.

7. Excavation, Cofferdam and Water Access

Trench and Excavation Access

- Provide a stairway, ladder, ramp or other safe egress in trenches 4 feet or deeper.
- Locate access so employees travel no more than 25 feet laterally.
- Extend at least 3 feet above the landing or provide compliant securement and grasping device.
- Secure against displacement, maintain stable footing and keep the ladder within the protected area.
- Keep access free of mud and water and relocate as work progresses.
- Do not climb trench-box spreaders, shoring, braces, buckets or excavation walls.
- The excavation competent person inspects ladder access during required excavation inspections.

Cofferdam Access

- Cofferdams require at least two means of rapid exit; a single ladder is not sufficient.
- Exit ladders must remain immediately available and lead to safe areas outside the emergency hazard.
- Secure ladders; maintain slip-resistant approaches/landings and keep free of mud, ice, algae, hoses and obstructions.
- Illuminate during night work and account for changing water levels, dewatering stages and evacuation routes.
- Do not allow routine access arrangements to interfere with emergency exit or controlled flooding plans.

Barges, Floats and Water Exposure

- Do not use a portable ladder from a barge, float or unstable surface unless the ladder is secured and the platform is suitable for the load and movement.
- Control wake, current, wind, ice and vessel movement.
- Wear a properly fitted U.S. Coast Guard-approved PFD whenever drowning exposure exists.
- Maintain ring buoys, rescue boat/skiff, communications and access under the Working Over or Near Water Program.

PROTECTED ACCESS

The ladder and employee must remain inside the excavation protective system. A ladder does not protect an employee crossing an unprotected cave-in zone.

8. Fixed and Job-Made Ladders

Fixed-Ladder Inspection

- Inspect rungs, rails, anchorage, structural connections, corrosion, climbing clearance and step-across distance.
- Verify landings, access openings, guardrails/gates, cages/wells, ladder safety systems and top/bottom conditions.
- Correct sharp projections, missing components, slippery rungs or obstructions before use.
- Coordinate owner-provided fixed-ladder deficiencies; employees may not use a deficient ladder merely because Pheifer Brothers does not own it.

Fixed-Ladder Fall Protection

- For construction, fixed ladders with a climb of 24 feet or more, or with a top more than 24 feet above the lower level under applicable conditions, require the protection specified by 29 CFR 1926.1053.
- Company standard for newly installed fixed ladders extending more than 24 feet is an approved ladder safety system or personal fall-arrest system; a cage alone is not accepted as the primary system.
- Inspect the system and use compatible harness/connectors; connect before entering exposure and remain connected throughout the climb.
- A ladder safety system is for climbing and fall arrest; it does not authorize leaning outside rails or working in an unsupported position.
- Plan prompt rescue for employees using personal fall protection.

Job-Made Ladders

- Use only when approved manufactured ladders are not practical and under competent-person supervision.
- Use sound lumber free of hazardous defects and construct uniformly spaced, supported/inset cleats and adequate rails.
- Design for expected users and loads and comply with Subpart X requirements.
- Secure against movement and inspect before use.
- Do not improvise from scrap, form lumber, rebar, scaffold components or other unsuitable material.

OWNER EQUIPMENT

Before using an owner-, contractor- or structure-provided fixed ladder, Pheifer Brothers must verify that the ladder and required fall-protection system are acceptable.

9. Working Position, Weather, Training and Stop Work

Working From a Ladder

- Use ladders for access and short-duration light work only when stable body position can be maintained.
- Keep torso between rails, maintain safe hand/foot contact and use lightweight controllable tools.
- Use hand lines or tool belts rather than climbing with materials.
- Use scaffold or aerial lift for two-handed force, heavy/bulky material, significant drilling/chipping/pulling, extended work, work outside rails, rescue access or a stable platform need.
- Do not connect fall arrest to a portable ladder unless the ladder/anchorage system is specifically designed and approved.

Weather and Environment

- Stop when wind could move the ladder/user, lightning creates electrical risk, or ice/snow/mud/water prevents safe footing.
- Stop when visibility is inadequate, support becomes unstable or flooding/severe weather affects access.
- Remove contamination and reassess wet/frozen wood or damaged fiberglass before use.
- Reinspect after weather, impact, movement or other changed conditions.

Training and Retraining

- A competent person trains employees on fall hazards, selection, setup, inspection, care, load capacity, safe use, electrical hazards and applicable excavation/cofferdam/fixed-ladder requirements.
- Employees must demonstrate understanding before use.
- Retrain after unsafe use, changed ladder/work conditions, incident/near miss or inadequate knowledge/skill.
- Document training; toolbox talks reinforce but do not replace required training.

Stop-Work Conditions

- Defective/wrong ladder; base/top cannot be secured; correct length/duty rating is unavailable.
- Electrical, traffic, equipment, doorway, edge or falling-object exposure is uncontrolled.
- Wind, ice, mud, water or unstable support makes use unsafe.
- Employee cannot maintain stable position or the task requires force, heavy materials or overreaching.
- A scaffold, stairway or aerial lift is the safer method.

CHOOSE THE SAFER METHOD

Convenience and short duration do not justify ladder use when the task or location requires a stable protected platform.

10. Test Your Knowledge

Circle the best answer. Review missed questions with your foreman before using a ladder.

1. How far must an access ladder extend above a landing? A. 1 foot B. At least 3 feet, unless the approved alternative is used C. 6 feet	2. What is the general setup ratio for a straight/extension ladder? A. 2:1 B. 1:1 C. About 4:1
3. What should happen to a defective ladder? A. Tag/control it and remove it from service B. Use it for light work C. Repair it with wire	4. May an employee stand on a stepladder's top or top step? A. Yes, below 6 feet B. No C. Only with a spotter
5. At what trench depth is safe egress required? A. 2 feet B. 6 feet C. 4 feet or deeper	6. What is the maximum lateral travel to trench egress? A. 25 feet B. 50 feet C. 100 feet
7. How many rapid exits must a cofferdam have? A. One B. Three C. At least two	8. When should a scaffold or lift replace a ladder? A. Only in rain B. When force, heavy materials, extended work or overreaching prevents safe ladder position C. Never
9. What ladder material is used where electrical contact is possible? A. Appropriate nonconductive ladder, with required electrical clearance B. Any aluminum ladder C. Wet wood	10. May a person holding the base replace ladder securement? A. Yes, always B. Yes, above 20 feet C. No; holding is temporary assistance, not a substitute for required securement

EMPLOYEE: _____

DATE: _____

ANSWER KEY: 1-B | 2-C | 3-A | 4-B | 5-C | 6-A | 7-C | 8-B | 9-A | 10-C