

# Ladder safety in construction

**Safe At Work Ontario**  
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Improper use of ladders on construction projects continues to be a major cause of workplace injuries in Ontario.

## Some general duties of workplace parties

### Employers

Employers' obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and the Construction Projects Regulation include, but are not limited to:

- ensuring workers are adequately trained in the use of fall protection systems at Ontario construction sites [O. Reg. 213/91, section 26.2]
- appointing a competent person as a supervisor [OHSA clause 25(2)(c)]
- taking every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker [OHSA clause 25(2)(h)].

An employer with six or more workers must also:

- prepare an occupational health and safety policy
- review that policy at least once a year
- set up a program to implement it [clause 25(2)(j)], and
- post, in a conspicuous place, a copy of the occupational health and safety policy [OHSA clause 25(2)(k)].

### Supervisors

Supervisors' duties under the OHSA include, but are not limited to:

- ensuring workers work in compliance with the act and regulations, using protective devices, measures and procedures required by the OHSA and regulations [clause 27(1)(a)], and
- taking every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of workers [clause 27(2)(c)].

### Workers

Workers' duties under the OHSA include, but are not limited to:

- working in compliance with the act and regulations, using protective devices, equipment and clothing that their employer requires them to use [subsection 28(1)], and
- not using or operating any equipment, machine, device or thing or working in a manner that may endanger themselves or any other worker [clause 28(2)(b)].

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## Protecting workers

All workplace parties — employers, supervisors and workers — are responsible for ensuring compliance with the provisions of the OHSA and prescribed regulations. There are many factors to consider for the safe use of ladders on construction projects.

### Obligations under the OHSA and the Construction Projects Regulation

- Manufactured ladders on a construction project must comply with O. Reg. 213/91, section 78.
- Job-built wooden ladders must comply with O. Reg. 213/91, sections 81 and 82.
- A ladder must be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions [O. Reg. 213/91, section 93(3)].
- Safe distance must be maintained from energized electrical equipment and overhead power lines [O. Reg. 213/91, sections 187 and 188].
- Workers need to be aware of the written emergency procedures in place (required to be established by the constructor) at the project in the event of an accident [O. Reg. 213/91, section 17].
- Employers must ensure that personal protective equipment (PPE) needed for the job is used by workers and maintained in good condition. The PPE must comply with applicable standards. Where required, the employer must ensure that the PPE is used, maintained and stored according to manufacturer's instructions, applicable standards, and legislated requirements. The workers must be adequately trained on the use of the PPE [O. Reg. 213/91, sections 21, 26 and 93].
- Workers need to know who is in charge of the operation — supervisor? "competent person"<sup>1</sup>? [O. Reg. 213/91, section 14].

### Health and safety considerations and best practices

Here are some of the many factors to consider for the safe use of ladders on construction projects:

- Does a ladder provide the safest means of access and egress for the work location and type of work — or would stairs or a ramp be better, especially with respect to workplace emergency procedures?
- What type of ladder is most suitable considering the workplace restrictions and conditions (height, space, proximity of energized power lines, top support, footing support surface, etc.)? Never use metal ladders near energized electrical equipment or wires.
- Has the proper equipment been provided for material handling to reduce the risk of overexertion or musculoskeletal disorders? (Consider work positioning, lifting devices, etc.)
- How are materials and equipment transported or moved between levels?
- Is the user of the ladder able to maintain three-point contact at all times when entering to or leaving the work location?
- If work must be carried out at height, a work platform should be used. Ladders should be used to work at heights only as a last resort – when location restrictions prevent the use of a work platform.
- A worker on a ladder must be protected against falling if he/she is working at a height of 3 metres or more.
- Defective ladders should be taken out of service and discarded.
- All workers, including young workers and workers new to the job, must be adequately trained and properly supervised.
- Specific work-related hazards must be analyzed and relevant controls established.

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<sup>1</sup> The OHSA defines a "competent person" as:

- having the knowledge, training and experience to organize the work
- being familiar with the OHSA and the Construction Regulation, and
- being able to identify existing and potential health and safety hazards and/or unsafe working conditions.

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## More information about safety on construction projects

- Ministry of Labour, construction safety: <http://www.ontario.ca/ConstructionSafety>
- Infrastructure Health & Safety Association: <http://www.ihsa.ca>
- Workplace Safety & Insurance Board: <http://www.wsib.on.ca>
- CSA standards (view only) referenced in occupational health and safety legislation: <http://ohsviewaccess.csa.ca>

## Call toll-free

Call 1-877-202-0008 anytime to report workplace health and safety incidents or for general inquiries about health and safety at the workplace.

**Note:** *This document does not constitute legal advice and has no legal effect.*

*To determine your rights and obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and its regulations, please consult your legal counsel or refer to the legislation at [http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_90o01\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90o01_e.htm).*