

Safety Note #170

## OFFICE STEP LADDER SAFETY



*Among the superstitious, walking under a ladder is considered bad luck—but the real danger of ladders lies in their everyday use at home or on the job. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 500,000 people are treated in the US for ladder-related injuries. In 2020 alone, there were 161 fatal work injuries directly related to ladders, with over 22,000 non-fatal injuries, highlighting the significant risks associated with ladder use in the workplace.*

The standard step ladders and step stools used in offices are folding ladders 6 feet or less in height. They are generally used in an office for light-duty tasks, such as reaching top shelves in storage areas, changing light bulbs, and hanging items on walls. Title 8, Section 3276 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR), requires all employees to be trained prior to using a ladder. **Video E-072 Ladder Safety is available from the ANR Environmental Health**

**and Safety Library at <http://safety.ucanr.edu>.**

**Definitions:** STEPLADDER – A self-supporting portable ladder, nonadjustable in length, with flat steps, a hinged base and a pail shelf. The top step and cap are NOT to be climbed on.  
STEP STOOL – A self-supporting portable ladder, nonadjustable in length, 32 inches or less in size, without a pail shelf and designed so the top cap and all steps can be climbed on.

### Ladder Precautions:

- Always inspect ladders for defects (damaged rungs, steps, braces, feet) before using. If a ladder is found damaged, do not use, and report it to your supervisor or safety officer. Damaged ladders must be destroyed before being discarded. Damaged ladders will be taken out of service and “RED TAGGED”.
- Ladders are to be free of oil, grease, or any slippery materials.
- Always set ladders on a solid, level surface.
- Step ladders and step stools must be fully opened with spreaders locked.
- Do not use step ladders and step stools as a straight ladder in a folded and leaning position.
- Never place a ladder in front of a door that is not locked, blocked or guarded.
- Never place a ladder against a window pane or sash.
- Do not overreach on the ladder! Climb off and move the ladder over instead.
- Keep your body centered on the middle of the ladder.
- Get someone to assist you when working with a ladder.
- Try to avoid lifting or carrying heavy items while climbing up or down a ladder.
- Do not climb on a ladder and face away from it to work.
- Do not exceed the weight capacity of the ladder! All ladders must have the capacity posted on it. The weight capacity includes the person AND any materials being carried.
- Ladders must have all of the factory-appropriate warnings and information labels intact. If labels are missing or damaged, the ladder must be taken out of service until the labels are replaced.
- Only non-conductive ladders (wood, fiberglass) must be used for working around electrical equipment.
- Ladders and stools cannot be placed on boxes or any other materials to raise the height.
- Ladders are to be stored in a manner to prevent damage. Do not store other materials on them or store ladders out in the open weather.