

OSHA Training Toolbox Talk: Storage of Portable Ladders

[Reference 1910 Subpart D / 1926 Subpart X]

Portable ladders are always subject to potential damage when we are using them on the jobsite. But they can also suffer damage, either immediately or over time, because we do not take steps to store them properly. So here are some precautions we can take to help extend the life of our portable ladders when they are NOT being used, and as a result, keeping them safer for use on the job.

- Pick a ladder storage area that is not exposed to direct sun. The UV rays from the sunlight actually breaks down the fibers in plastic reinforced ladders, and can cause plastic caps and shelves used on many metal ladders to become brittle over time. The UV rays can also cause the instructional and warning stickers applied by manufacturers to fade and become illegible.
- Do not store portable ladders where they are exposed to rain, mist, steam, or other sources of moisture. This can cause wood and plastic reinforced ladders to swell over time, and can also allow mold and mildew to form on their surfaces, making them slippery. Moisture can also contribute to metal fasteners and hardware corroding over time.
- Make sure that portable ladders are not stored where exposed to excessive amounts of heat, such as next to a boiler, furnace, or other equipment that gets hot. Depending on the material the ladder is made from, excessive heat can cause the ladder to warp, become brittle, or even suffer burn damage. For the same general reasons, avoid storage of portable ladders near any sources of sparks or flames.
- Do not store portable ladders next to doorways, blind corners, or near equipment traffic lanes where they can be struck by persons passing by, or by moving machinery or equipment such as forklifts or rolling carts.
- When storing portable step ladders, make sure they are folded shut and secured in an upright position so they do not sag or twist. Portable extension ladders should be stored so they will remain flat and evenly supported. Use a strap or similar device to retain the ladders from falling over if there is a reasonable potential for them to be stuck and knocked over.
- Do not use a stored ladder to hang tools and equipment. And do not lean materials or equipment against stored ladders, as these practices can lead to unnecessary wear and twisting on the ladder.
- Be aware of overhead hazards such as electrical lines or equipment that might be struck when selecting an area to store your portable ladders. These hazards should always be avoided as the next person to come along and grab the ladder may not be aware of the overhead hazard and make accidental contact.

It's also a good practice to read and follow all ladder manufacturers' instructions and warnings regarding storage of your portable ladder.

Does anyone have any additional tips to share for the safe storage of portable ladders? Thank you for your attention, and please be sure to sign your name to the training certification form so you get credit for attending today's training session.

