Ladders and Step Stools

The proper use and maintenance of ladders and step stools is necessary to ensure the safety of all third party vendors and to comply with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards. Using ladders incorrectly can cause injuries from falls, strains and struck-by incidents and can also lead to more severe injuries, like contusions, fractures, and death. It is important for all third party vendors to know how to practice safe ladder and step stool use.

Select the right sized tool for the job:
• If you need to retrieve a heavy, large, bulky or awkward item from an elevated location, talk to the LOD.
• If a ladder is used, always ensure the ladder is tall enough for the task e.g. some ladders have rungs marked at the top that are unsafe for standing. If you need to ascend four feet, you may need to select a six foot ladder.
• Sometimes the right-sized tool is a step stool.
  • Do not use or procure step stools sold in the store. Talk to an LOD if step stools need to be ordered.
  • Use step stools when stocking and any time you need to reach above your shoulders.
  • **Never** use pallets or heavy boxed product as a step stool.

Verify the ladder or step stool is in good working condition by visually inspecting it:
• Look for damaged rungs, stairs, rails, bracing and missing feet; or locking/spread/stabilizer bars that will not secure the ladder.
• Cotterman ladders – Before climbing, verify all support rails are secured, with no gaps, and that ladder brakes are actually securing the ladder.
• Step stools – Verify these are not cracked, chipped, broken, and are not missing the anti-slip material or feet.

If the ladder or step stool is damaged:
• Remove it from service and notify the LOD immediately.
• Examples of damaged ladders include:
  • Rungs that are bent, dented or cracked. These can cause poor footing, balance or traction.
  • Rivets are broken or missing.
  • Rubber or plastic feet are missing (unless approved replacements can be found and installed).
  • Metal ladders that cannot be repaired should be swept back on pallets to the DC. Follow the metal recycling process.
  • Spreader bars are missing, bent or broken.
  • Side rails are bent, cracked or splitting. Any bend in a side rail reduces the capacity of the ladder.
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Always use the ladder safely:
• Always hand heavy, large, bulky, or awkward items up or down to another person while stationary on the ladder.
• Never stand on rungs or platforms marked as unsafe for standing. Cotterman ladders do have a standing platform; do not stand on the rails around the platform.
• Always face the ladder while ascending or descending.
• Stay in the center of the ladder and do not overreach for any reason.
• Always maintain three points-of-contact when climbing ladders (at least one hand and two feet).
• Verify locking bars are secure and/or blue stabilizer bars are in place.
• Ensure there is no product at the bottom of the ladder that could cause a trip hazard.
• Never use the ladder to step onto the racking or shelving.
• While descending the ladder, watch carefully for the last step. Some ladders have notches in their handrails to alert you to the approaching floor.
• After use, return the ladder or step stool to its backroom location. Freestanding ladders must be secured to a wall when not in use.

Activity
• Work with your MarketSource trainer to practice proper and safe use of ladders and step stools.