

Common access equipment

Access equipment includes items such as hop-ups, stepladders, ladders, podium steps, lightweight stagings and trestle systems, scaffolding and powered access equipment.

There is a solution available to meet every need of the construction industry.

In line with the Work at Height Regulations 2005, all work at height should be avoided, where possible.



What to consider before working at height

Before working at height, you must make sure that the work has been properly planned, that supervision is in place, and that the workers are competent to do the job.

You must also ensure that the correct piece of equipment has been selected for the task following a risk assessment. This should be a sensible approach, as lots of low-risk, straightforward tasks will require less effort when it comes to planning.

The Health and Safety Executive states that before and when working at height, you should:

- avoid work at height where it's reasonably practicable to do so
- prevent falls (if work cannot be easily avoided) by using an existing place of work that is already safe, or the right type of equipment
- minimise the distance and consequences of a fall (where the risk cannot be eliminated) by using the right type of equipment
- do as much work as possible from the ground
- ensure that workers can get safely to and from the work at height
- make sure that equipment is suitable, stable and strong enough for the job, and is maintained and checked regularly
- take precautions when working on or near fragile surfaces
- provide protection from falling objects.

Points to consider when using ladders

- Is a ladder the right piece of access equipment to be using?
- Has the person using the ladder received training in the correct use of the equipment?
- Are ladders only used for light work of short duration, or for access?
- Are all ladders properly stored and inspected regularly?
- Are the ladders suitable for the work activity for which they are being used?
- Are there any damaged, loose or missing parts?
- Are the rungs of ladders clean and free of mud, paint or grease?
- Are sufficient persons available to handle and place ladders properly and safely?
- Are ladders set on firm and level ground?
- Are ladders properly erected and secured?
- Does the ladder project sufficiently above the landing place?
- Is the overlap correct on extension ladders?
- Are the methods for raising tools or materials safe?
- Are ladders placed so that the work does not involve overreaching?
- Is suitable footwear being worn that will give a satisfactory grip and prevent slipping?
- Are ladders set at the correct angle of 75°?
- Are ladders clear of overhead cables, excavations or other potential hazards?
- Are ladders being leant against or secured to any fragile material?
- Are all lashings made of sound material and properly secured?

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Common access equipment *continued*

Points to consider when using stepladders

- Has the person using the stepladder received training in the correct use of the equipment?
- Is the stepladder level and stable?
- Is it open to the full extent of the retaining cords or hinges?
- Are steps set at right angles to the workface wherever possible?
- Are the user's knees below the top step, and are they not using the top third of the ladder?

Points to consider when using trestles

- Are trestles – and any boards that are being used with the trestles – safe, undamaged and of adequate strength?
- Has the person using the trestles received training in the correct use of the equipment?
- Are the trestles set on a firm and level base?
- Is the working platform of a sufficient width for the job in hand?
- Are guardrails and toeboards fitted to trestle platforms?
- Where indicated as necessary by a risk assessment, is the trestle tied to the adjacent structure?
- Is safe ladder access provided?
- Is the maximum permitted distributed load indicated and complied with?

Points to consider when using podium steps

- Are the podium steps of sufficient size, and the correct type, for the task?
- Has the person using the podium steps received training in the correct use of the equipment?
- Have the operators been supplied with, and fully understand, the manufacturer's instructions for use?
- Are all of the components available and in good condition?
- Is the floor surface sound and of a level construction?
- Are brakes provided, in working order and being used?
- Do all podium steps carry unique identifying marks, and are they subject to frequent inspection?

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