Reynoldston Village Hall Association - using ladders in the Hall

Rules and guidance for Hirers and Volunteers using a ladder – Aug 2018

The key rules for using a ladder at the Hall

- A hirer must obtain permission from a member of the Management Committee to use a ladder in the Hall;
- Ladders owned by the Hall can be made available for use by hirers and volunteers;
- Ladders **MUST NOT** be brought to the Hall for use by anyone other than contractors employed by the Hall;
- A ladder must not be used by a hirer or volunteer when only one person is present in the Hall;
- Hirers and volunteers must be made aware of these guidance notes, a copy of which is to be found on the notice board in the entrance porch. When permission to use a ladder is given, the Committee member must draw these notes to the attention of hirers and volunteers who must read them before they start using a ladder;
- **Height Restriction – Hirers must not reach, work above 8 metres or make any fixing above the height of, or on the radiant heaters in the main Hall.**

The user must check the ladder before use

Before starting a task, you should always carry out a 'pre-use' check to spot any obvious visual defects to make sure the ladder is safe to use.

- **Check** at the beginning of the working period;
- **Check** after something has changed, eg a ladder has been dropped or moved from a dirty area to a clean area (check the state or condition of the feet);
- **Check the stiles** (verticals) – make sure they are not bent or damaged, as the ladder could buckle or collapse.
- **Check the feet** – if they are missing, worn or damaged the ladder could slip. Also check ladder feet when moving from soft/dirty ground (eg dug soil, loose sand/stone, a dirty workshop) to a smooth, solid surface (eg paving slabs), to make sure the foot material and not the dirt (eg soil, chippings or embedded stones) is making contact with the ground.
- **Check the rungs** – if they are bent, worn, missing or loose the ladder could fail.

- **Check any locking mechanisms** – if they are bent or the fixings are worn or damaged the ladder could collapse. Ensure any locking bars are engaged.

- **Check the stepladder platform** – if it is split or buckled the ladder could become unstable or collapse.

- **Check the steps or treads on stepladders** – if they are contaminated they could be slippery; if the fixings are loose on steps, they could collapse. If you spot any of the above defects, don't use the ladder and notify a member of the Management Committee.

Use your ladder safely

Once you have done your 'pre-use' check, there are simple precautions that can minimise the risk of a fall.

Leaning ladders - when using a leaning ladder to carry out a task:

- **check** the pictogram or label on the ladder for information;

- **only** carry light materials and tools – read the manufacturers' labels on the ladder and assess the risks;

- **make sure** it is long enough or high enough for the task;

- **make sure** the ladder angle is at 75° – you should use the 1 in 4 rule (ie 1 unit out for every 4 units up)

- **always** grip the ladder and face the ladder rungs while climbing or descending – don't slide down the stiles;

- **avoid** holding items when climbing (consider using a tool belt);

- **maintain** three points of contact when climbing (this means a hand and two feet) and wherever possible at the work position –

- **where you cannot** maintain a handhold, other than for a brief period (eg to hold a nail while starting to knock it in, starting a screw etc), you will need to take other measures to prevent a fall or reduce the consequences if one happened;

- **for a leaning ladder**, you should secure it (eg by tying the ladder to prevent it from slipping either outwards or sideways) and have a strong upper resting point, ie do not rest a ladder against weak upper surfaces (eg glazing or plastic gutters);

- **don't** overreach – make sure your belt buckle (navel) stays within the stiles;

- **don't** overload it – consider workers' weight and the equipment or materials they are carrying before working at height.

- **don't** try to move or extend ladders while standing on the rungs;

- **don't** work off the top three rungs, and try to make sure the ladder extends at least 1 m (three rungs) above where you are working;

- **don't** stand ladders on moveable objects, such as pallets, bricks, lift trucks, tower scaffolds, excavator buckets, vans, or mobile elevating work platforms;

- **don't** work within 6 m horizontally of any overhead power line, unless it has been made dead or it is protected with insulation. Use a non-conductive ladder (eg fibreglass or timber) for any electrical work

Stepladders

When using a stepladder to carry out a task:

- **check** all four stepladder feet are in contact with the ground and the steps are level;

- **only** carry light materials and tools;

- **check** and ensure any locking devices are engaged;

- **don't** overreach;

- **don't** stand and work on the top three steps (including a step forming the very top of the stepladder) unless there is a suitable handhold;

- **try** to position the stepladder to face the work activity and not side on.

- However, there are occasions when a risk assessment may show it is safer to work side on, eg in a retail stock room when you can't engage the stepladder locks to work face on because of space restraints in narrow aisles, but you can fully lock it to work side on;

- **try** to avoid work that imposes a side loading, such as side-on drilling through solid materials (eg bricks or concrete);

- **where** side-on loadings cannot be avoided, you should prevent the steps from tipping over, eg by tying the steps. Otherwise, use a more suitable type of access equipment;

- **maintain** three points of contact at the working position. This means two feet and one hand, or when both hands need to be free for a brief period, two feet and the body supported by the stepladder

When deciding if it is safe to carry out a particular task on a stepladder where you cannot maintain a handhold (eg to put a box on a shelf, hang wallpaper, install a smoke detector on a ceiling), this needs to be justified, taking into account:

- the height of the task;
- whether a handhold is still available to steady yourself before and after the task;
- whether it is light work;
- whether it avoids side loading;
- whether it avoids overreaching;
- whether the stepladder can be tied (eg when side-on working).

What about the place of work where the ladder will be used?

As a guide, only use a ladder:

- **on** firm ground;

- **on** level ground – refer to the manufacturer's pictograms on the side of the ladder. Use proprietary levelling devices, not ad-hoc packing such as bricks, blocks, timbers etc;

- **on** clean, solid surfaces (paving slabs, floors etc). These need to be clean (no oil, moss or leaf litter) and free of loose material (sand, packaging materials etc) so the feet can grip. Shiny floor surfaces can be slippery even without contamination;

- **where** they will not be struck by vehicles (protect the area using suitable barriers or ones);

- **where** they will not be pushed over by other hazards such as doors or windows, ie secure the doors (not fire exits) and windows where possible;

- **where** the general public are prevented from using it, walking underneath it or being at risk because they are too near (use barriers, cones or, as a last resort, a person standing guard at the base);

- **where** it has been secured.

What are the options for securing ladders?

The options are as follows:

- tie the ladder to a suitable point, making sure both stiles are tied ;
- where this is not practical, secure with an effective ladder stability device
- if this is not possible, then securely wedge the ladder, eg wedge the stiles against a wall;

if you can't achieve any of these options, foot the ladder (someone to stand on the bottom rung). **Footing is the last resort.**

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What about ladders used for access?

In general:

ladders used to access another level should be tied and extend at least 1 m above the landing point to provide a secure handhold. At ladder access points, a self-closing gate is recommended;

stepladders should not be used to access another level, unless they have been specifically designed for this.

What about the condition of the equipment?

Ladders and step ladders owned by the hall must only be used when they are suitable for the work task and in a safe condition before use.

As a guide, only use ladders or stepladders that:

- **have** no visible defects. They should have a pre-use check each working day;

- **have** an up-to-date record of the detailed visual inspections carried out regularly by a competent person. These should be done in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions;

- **are** suitable for the intended use, ie are strong and robust enough for the job. HSE recommends British Standard (BS) Class 1 'Industrial' or BS EN 131 ladders for use at work;

- **have** been maintained and stored in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

- A detailed visual inspection is similar to ‘pre-use’ checks’, in that it is used to spot defects. It can be done in-house by a competent person (pre-use checks should be part of a user’s training) and detailed visual inspections should be recorded.

When doing an inspection, look for:

- twisted, bent or dented stiles;
- cracked, worn, bent or loose rungs;
- missing or damaged tie rods;
- cracked or damaged welded joints, loose rivets or damaged stays.

Make pre-use checks and inspect ladder stability devices and other accessories in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions