

*Guidance Note, GN014***INSPECTION OF LADDERS AND STEPLADDERS**

The Health and Safety Executive has determined that a third of all reported fall-from-height incidents involve ladders and stepladders. A significant portion of these incidents involve ladders which are in poor condition. Often defects in ladders go unnoticed or are not remedied because people do not know what to look for or feel that the defects are not serious enough to warrant replacement of the ladder. Because falls from ladders often result in serious injuries, any defects which affect the stability or integrity of a ladder should result in the ladder being taken out of use. Defective ladders should be replaced rather than being repaired.

**Ladders should be inspected to ensure that they are in a safe condition. They should be inspected**

- **By the user each time before they are used**
- **By someone carrying out a formal inspection at frequency of every 6 to 12 months, dependant on the frequency of use of the ladder (records should be kept of these formal inspections).**

Experience in the University has shown that, in the absence of arrangements for formally inspecting ladders, ladders can develop defects which go unnoticed and make the ladders unsafe for use. We have seen accidents involving defective ladders which have resulted in serious injuries. (An accident resulted in a member of staff breaking a bone in her arm and saw a contractor falling when a rung on a ladder broke.)

Visual guidance on points to look for when inspecting ladders can be found [here](#).

The records of inspection of ladders can be kept in any convenient form. As a minimum the record should identify the ladder, give the date of the inspection and the name of the person carrying out the inspection along with his/her signature. Ladders can be identified either by numbering them or, if there are only a few ladders, by describing them. If they are not going to be damaged while the ladder is in use, records of inspection could be attached to the ladder (e.g. by use of a label stuck onto the ladder). A University ladder/stepladder inspection template that can be used has been developed and can be accessed [here](#).

Further guidance on the use of ladders and stepladders is contained in the HSE publication [“Safe use of ladders and stepladders – an employers’ guide”](#), Ref INDG402.

*Allan Petrie  
University Safety Adviser  
August 2018*