Service

Title: SAFETY PROCEDURE – WORKING WITH LADDERS	Doc No: OHS-03-009
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Water heaters and solar collectors are sometimes installed in locations above or below ground level where access can only be achieved by use of a stepladder or extension ladder. There are limits to the safe use of a ladder and this procedure is issued, as one means of ensuring technicians are safe when using ladders.

Technicians and Supervisors must comply with the following requirements:

1. Technicians must have available the correct ladder for the purpose. Three types of ladders should be available to technicians:

   a) Stepladders
   b) extension ladders
   c) non-conductive ladders if working with live electricity

   all ladders must comply with the requirements of AS1892.

2. **All ladders should be adequately supported at the base** – Wet grass with soft soil beneath it, or a makeshift support under one side is not acceptable. If the surface is too soft to support the ladder, use a plank or board under the feet of the ladder to stop them from sinking. Depending on the degree of unevenness, a plank or board under one or both feet may be adequate, providing the plank(s) are stable, i.e. much wider than the thickness, and large enough not to sink into the ground on one side. If the ground is uneven, use a purpose-made device to steady the ladder. Do not erect the ladder on a slippery surface; its stability depends on the friction at the base of the ladder.

3. **A ladder should never be "walked" by the person standing on the ladder** – The word "walked," describes the action of a person standing at the top of a ladder who, by moving his body, causes the bottom of the ladder to lift the ends of the stiles alternately to cause the ladder to move. This is a very dangerous practice, since the ladder is not under proper control.

4. **Set the ladder at a slope of approximately 4 in 1** – For every metre in height, the ladder should extend out from the vertical surface at the base by about 250 mm. This will minimise the chance of the ladder falling backward or the bottom of the ladder sliding away from the wall, and is the most comfortable and safe slope for climbing and working from the ladder.

5. **One ladder, one person, and it is recommended that one should always have three limbs on the ladder at all times** – This means either two feet and one hand, or one foot and two hands on the ladder when ascending, descending, or working on the ladder. To achieve this, always carry your tools in a tool belt, holster or pouch, not in your hands. Never attach a power tool to the side of a ladder when it is not in use.

6. In addition, any ladder used near power lines should be non-conducting, such as timber (without wire reinforcement, or with the wire reinforcement recessed and insulated) or fibreglass, but not aluminium or any metal.

7. **Never climb higher than the third rung from the top of the ladder –** The ladder should be long enough to provide at least 1m of solid support beyond the height of the task. Where it is necessary to get onto or off at the top of the ladder, it should extend at least 1m above the level being accessed. As a general rule, a ladder should be used as a means of access and not a place of work. If it is necessary to work from a ladder, do not climb higher than a position where the worker's shoulders are level with the top of the stiles. This allows for a secure hold to be maintained while working. Only use a ladder as a place of work if the worker can grasp the ladder near waist height, and only for tasks, which allow the worker to hold the ladder with one hand. Ladders should be placed in a manner that permits the worker to face towards both the ladder and the task without leaning over the side of the ladder. When working from a ladder, always work within easy arm's reach from the ladder. This minimises the possibility of overbalancing and falling off.

   Ladders should not be used outdoors when strong winds are blowing. If their use cannot be avoided under these conditions, adequate care must be taken to secure the ladder by tying it off at top and bottom. When the ladder is being tied off, it should be held securely by another person.

   Ladders under 3m in length, which are not normally tied off in use, should incorporate rubber (or similar non-slip material) feet to prevent slipping.

   Ladders longer than 3m should be tied off for stability. The ties should be attached to the stiles of the ladder, not the rungs. While the ladder is being tied off, it should be held securely by another person.

   If it is not practical to tie off a ladder over 3m in height for whatever reason, the ladder must be "footed" at the base by another person with both hands on the stiles to prevent any movement or overturn of the ladder.

   If a ladder must be used near a doorway, the door should be removed, blocked open or locked closed. Alternatively, a person may be placed on guard at the foot of the ladder. If a ladder is to be left unattended for a period of time in an area accessible to the public, disable it by securing a plank that covers the full width of the rungs onto the lower half of the ladder.

8. **Stepladders should only be used in the fully open position** – They should be positioned on a stable surface, with no tendency to wobble. They should be made as rigid as possible by the use of side braces and cross braces. Some specialised types of stepladders have a working platform for standing on at their top; this platform should

be surrounded by a handrail. Platform ladders should only be used for handling items that are located at a height compatible with the height of the platform.

9. **Fully enclosed slip resistant footwear should always be worn when using ladders.**

10. **Ladders need care –** They should be inspected at regular intervals and any defects or deterioration repaired before further use. Vehicle safety checks done as described in the Quality System shall also include inspection and repair or replacement of ladders.

11. **Maximum length of ladders listed in parts AS1892 1,2 and 3** –

Metal and Plastic Ladders:

Single	9m	industrial
	5m	domestic
Extension	15m	industrial
	7m	domestic
Stepladders	6.1m	industrial
	2.4m	domestic

Industrial ladders have a load rating of 120 kg.
Domestic ladders have a load rating of 100 kg.

Domestic ladders should not be used in an industrial environment.

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