

SAFETY ALERT

WORK-ABOVE-GROUND SAFETY

In general, work-above-ground means carrying out the work at less than 2 metres above the ground, which mostly involves general interior renovation and cleaning work. The improper use of ladders was the top cause for falling injury of “work-above-ground” cases, accounting for 33% of those falling injury cases since 2012 with a few fatalities.

Recently, it has been observed that an extensive use of ladders on campus for above-ground works. The repeated safety violations posed serious risks to workers. In fact, the use of ladders for above-ground work is generally prohibited under the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance, except under very exceptional circumstances with task-specific controlled conditions. **A ladder is intended for access, not as a working platform!**



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Key Points to Remember

1. Avoiding above-ground work where possible by, for example, designing and using specific hand tools to allow the work to be done safely on the ground;
2. Refraining from using ladders for work of any height;
3. Providing and ensuring the use of a suitable light duty working platform (Appendix);
4. Where light duty working platform cannot be erected and used in certain work environment (for example, where space is restrictive). Providing and ensuring the proper use of a suitable step platform (梯台) or hop-up platform (功夫橈) (Appendix) as appropriate if light duty above-ground work has to be carried out;
5. When all the above measures are found not feasible in special circumstances such that using ladder is unavoidable, exercising stringent control through conducting a thorough risk assessment, implementing a permit-to-work system and adopting all necessary safety measures related to use of ladders.

The use of ladder for above-ground work on campus is prohibited unless a risk assessment has been conducted and a permit to work system is in place!

Appendix

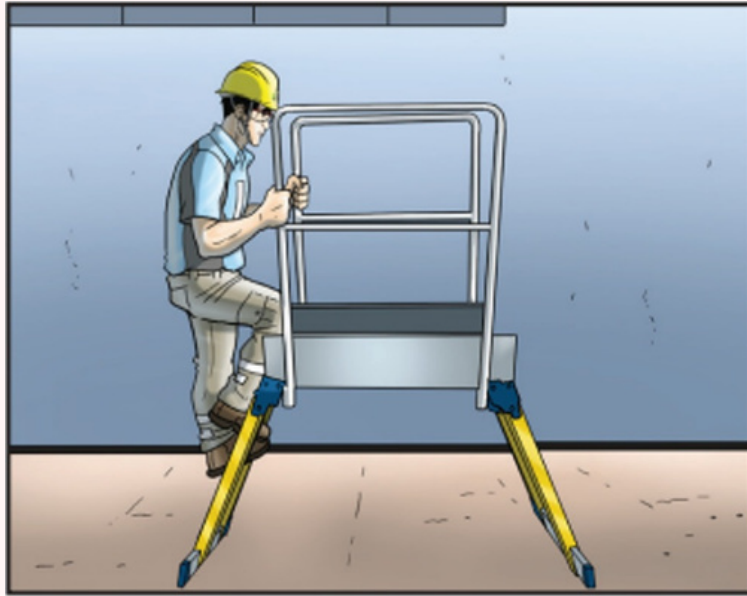


(a) Light duty working platform



(b) Step platform 梯台

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(c) Hop-up platform (功夫橈)

References:

- [Statutory Requirements about Work-above-ground Safety](#), (51) in LD/1-55/30 Pt.4; Labour Department (Headquarters)
- [Guidelines on Work-above-ground Safety](#), Version 1; Construction Industry Council
- [Overview of Work-at-height Safety](#), Second Edition; Labour Department
- [Safetywise](#), November 2017; HSEO
- [Systematic Safety Alert - Work-at-Height/work above ground](#), SSA-02/2021; Labour Department
- [Work Safety Alert - Fall from Wooden Folding Ladder](#), Jan 2025; Labour Department
- [Work Safety Alert - Fall from Wooden Folding Ladder \(Animation\)](#); Labour Department
- [Work Safety Alert - Fall from a Metal Ladder](#), July 2024; Labour Department