

IMPORTANT INFORMATION



Updated Safety Guidance

Portable Ladders

> **Ladder standards have changed**

> **What does this mean for you?**

> **What action do you need to take?**

The Ladder Association has played an important part in the development of the current ladder standards and welcomes the opportunity to introduce clarity around the standards and what you need to know.

www.ladderassociation.org.uk/en131

Ladder Standards

What's different?

EN 131 improves ladder safety:



BS EN 131 (the UK's version of EN 131), the single British & European product standard covering all types of portable ladders (step, extending and combination) has been significantly revised.

The changes improve the safety of ladders and make buying the right ladder much simpler.



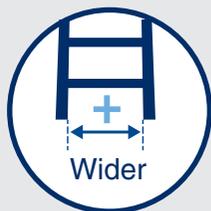
British Standards BS 2037 and BS 1129 (often referred to as Class 1 and Class 3 ladders) are no longer available and you can no longer buy ladders made to these withdrawn standards.

All ladders should now be designed and manufactured to the current EN 131 standard only.

Wider

Improved stability

EN 131
improves
ladder safety:



To make sure you are safe it's important that you use the right type of portable ladder for the job. One way you can do that is to make sure it meets the current design standard - EN 131.

A result of many years of work and research, the standard is made up of several parts covering the requirements for dimensions, tests, marking, user instructions and different types of ladder.

To comply with the standard and to be marked 'EN 131', a ladder must comply with all the relevant requirements in all the relevant parts. For instance EN131 Part 6 deals specifically with telescopic ladders, but they must also comply with other parts of the standard for dimensions, testing, labels and user instructions.

The latest standard means ladders are wider, stronger, sturdier and safer than ladders designed to previous and now withdrawn standards.

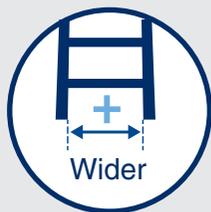
It has long been known that structures that are wider at the base than the top, are more stable...



Wider

Improved stability

EN 131
improves
ladder safety:



EN131 standing (step) ladders and combination ladders have been wider at the base for many years. Now however, leaning ladders, telescopic ladders and hinge-jointed ladders longer than 3 metres, must also be wider at the base to make them more stable.

The base size depends on the height and width of the ladder. While the standard does not specify how that dimension is achieved, designers, manufacturers and specifiers must ensure the design meets the standard.

Illustrated below are examples of base designs for leaning ladders that are now available from different manufacturers and suppliers:

A stabilising bar across the bottom of the ladder...



The sides of the ladder sloping outwards towards the base...



Stabilising legs which project outwards towards the base...



If you need to use a ladder on ground which is sloping or uneven, then the design of the base can have built in adjustments to make sure it can be set up level with the rungs horizontal.

If you need to position the ladder against a wall on one side, the design can allow you to temporarily adjust the width to re-position it to one side.

The most important aspect is that the stability is built into and permanently attached to the ladder from new, so the all-important and safe base dimensions are always there, and you will always be that much safer.

Ladder Classes

Professional and Non-Professional

EN 131 improves ladder safety:



Wider



Stronger



Sturdier

The EN131 standard has two classes – Professional and Non-Professional.

Professional

Professional ladders must be used in the workplace. They are specifically designed to be more durable than Non-Professional ladders, so they may be more expensive and a bit heavier.

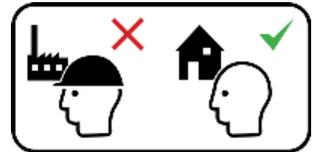
They can also be used by domestic users who choose to use them in their homes.



Non-Professional

Non-Professional ladders are intended and designed for use only by domestic users in their homes.

They are not intended or suitable for use in the workplace.



Both the Professional and Non-Professional ladders have the same 150kg maximum total load, that's the total weight of the user, their clothing, protective equipment, tools and materials.

The difference between the two classes is their durability.

EN131 has requirements for resistance of ladder feet to slipping so they should grip much better. However, this doesn't change the need to secure your ladder to prevent it slipping - that is still the best way to make a ladder safe and to prevent accidents.



Existing Ladders

Can you still use them?



The British standards BS2037 and BS1129 and their Class 1 and Class 3 ladders, together with old versions of EN131, are now obsolete and withdrawn - no reputable company is making or supplying ladders to these standards anymore.

If you have ladders that were compliant with the obsolete and withdrawn standards you may continue to use them if you are sure they are in good condition - that's because standards are not retrospective. If you find:

- > Your ladders are worn out
- > Your ladders are damaged
- > You need more ladders
- > You want to upgrade to the current safer EN131 standard...

then make sure you only buy ladders which meet the latest EN131 standard.

If you have ladders and you are not sure if they comply with the obsolete and withdrawn standards or the latest EN131 standard (because you don't have a record or the labels are gone), then we advise that you stop using them immediately. If you cannot be sure, you should scrap them properly and replace them with ladders which comply with the current EN131 standard.

Like most other standards, designers, manufacturers and suppliers are not legally obliged to comply with the EN131 standard, but they do have a legal requirement to supply safe products and compliance with latest EN131 being one way of proving that.

Professional Users (Business)

You should update your purchasing policies to specify EN 131 Professional ladders when your organisation needs to replace existing ladders, buy new ones or if you decide to upgrade to the latest safer EN131 ladders.

Non-Professional Users (Domestic)

When purchasing new ladders or replacing existing ones, you could buy either EN 131 Non-Professional or Professional ladders - it's up to you.

Non-Professional ladders should be perfectly adequate but you might want to consider spending a bit extra to buy a Professional ladder.

What you need to know when...

Buying Ladders



In the workplace there are legal requirements that employers must provide safe equipment. If you are self-employed, that applies to you too. In the home, you also need to be sure that the ladders you buy and use are safe. **You should only buy ladders designed and manufactured to the current standard.**

One way of ensuring and being able to demonstrate a portable ladder is safe, is to make sure that it fully complies with the requirements of the standard.

You can do that by checking that it has been independently checked and certified by a recognised and accredited certification organisation such as BSI, T&R or TUV. You should ask the supplier if the ladder is properly certified and to be doubly sure, ask for a copy of the certificate. If you are buying online and you cannot get a copy of the certification then it's probably best to shop somewhere else.

TOP TIP

There is a difference between certification and a test report. A test report just indicates that a single product passed a test to the standard. Certification from an independent recognised and accredited certification organisation is linked to an ongoing assessment of the quality of the products.

If a supplier cannot provide you with a copy of the ladder's certification to EN131, then you should seriously consider buying from another source - a reputable supplier will be able to give you this. Be very careful about buying from general online shopping sites where you'll find many suppliers making incorrect or false claims about compliance with EN131.

It is a requirement of the Ladder Association that its members should only supply portable ladders which are independently certified as compliant with the EN131 standard by a recognised and accredited certification organisation.

TOP TIP

You cannot CE mark a portable ladder, not only is it not possible - it is illegal! So, if you see any portable ladder with a CE mark then avoid it and buy elsewhere.

Questions

From changing ladders to training



Wouldn't it just be easier to ban ladders?

No, ladders can often be a sensible and practical option for low-risk and short duration tasks and there are some situations where a ladder may be the only practical possibility. The EN 131 standard will help to ensure that, whilst a ladder should not automatically be your first choice, they remain a viable solution for work at height where alternative forms of access cannot be used.

What if my company doesn't want to change ladders?

Well maintained ladders in good condition can still be used. Since it is good practice to specify the latest standard when selecting products, we recommend updating your purchasing policies to be ready to specify EN 131 Professional ladders when your organisation needs to replace existing ladders or buy new ones.

Do I need retraining on the new EN 131 ladders?

Already hold a LadderCard?

You don't need retraining to use the new style ladders (compliant with the new EN 131 standard).

Not yet ladder trained?

Ladder Association training equips people to understand the essential points about safe use, handling and storage of ladders, together with potential hazards of their use.

You should make sure that people with sufficient skills, knowledge and experience are employed to perform the task, or, if they are being trained, that they work under the supervision of somebody competent to do it.

LadderCard

The LadderCard is an effective and widely recognised way of showing proof of training for work at height from ladders and can help you to demonstrate competence as required by the Work at Height Regulations.



Get a Grip...

on ladder safety and training

If it's right to use a ladder, use the right ladder and get trained to use it safely



Carry out a risk assessment before deciding to use a ladder (other equipment may be more appropriate)



Ladders can be suitable for low-risk AND short duration tasks (under 30mins)



Always read the user instructions and the safety labels on the ladder

Keep up-to-date

Latest news and information

Download our **FREE** mobile app



Or download your FREE Ladder Safety Pack at:

www.ladderassociation.org.uk/get-a-grip

About the Ladder Association

The Ladder Association is the not-for-profit lead industry body dedicated to promoting the safe use of ladders and stepladders.

We work closely with the HSE and the Access Industry Forum (AIF) to support codes of good practice, minimum standards for equipment, trained and qualified operatives and education in the work at height sector.

Our members include manufacturers, rental companies, training providers and ladder users. In addition to administering the LadderCard training scheme, we publish safety guidance, a code of practice and technical notes (free on our website).

Approved Ladder Association Training Courses:



Ladder & Stepladder User Course



Ladder & Stepladder Inspection Course



NEW Ladder & Stepladder Combined User and Inspection Course



Working with Steps & Step Stools



www.ladderassociation.org.uk/en131

P.O Box 26970, Glasgow G3 9DS

+44 (0)345 260 1048 | info@ladderassociation.org.uk



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