



# Portable Wood Ladders -- OSHA Standard 1910.25 <sup>1</sup>

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## The Impact of Safety on Florida Agriculture

Florida agriculture, including forestry and fishing, made an annual economic impact of \$53 billion in 1998. More than 81,000 people work on the 40,000 farms in the state, and more than 50,000 are employed in other activities related to agriculture. The state's agricultural enterprises range from large citrus, vegetable and cattle operations to small family-operated farms.

From 1989 to 1998, there were approximately 240 deaths related to agriculture in Florida, according to data compiled by the Deep South Center for Agricultural Health and Safety. In addition, agriculture has one of the highest injury and death rates among U.S. industries.

Safety in Florida agriculture is challenging because:

- the state's agricultural enterprises are diverse,
- safety knowledge among workers varies,

- manual labor is used extensively,
- the climate creates year-round heat stress.

Therefore, it is vital to assist the public in learning about OSHA documents related to agriculture. More related information is available at the following Web sites:

Florida AgSafe: <<http://www.flagsafe.ufl.edu>>

OSHA Regulations:  
<<http://www.osha.gov/comp-links.html>>

## Overview

This document, a condensation of Section 1910.25 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (29 CFR), is not intended to be totally inclusive but rather to highlight the information and requirements in the complete OSHA standard that owners and managers of agricultural businesses should understand. Refer to the OSHA Web site given above for the complete standard and for court interpretations of the standard.

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## Contents of OSHA Standard 1910.25

- Section 1910.25(a) -- Application of Requirements
- Section 1910.25(b) -- Materials
- Section 1910.25(c) -- Construction Requirements
- Section 1910.25(d) -- Care and Use of Ladders

NOTE: Some sections of OSHA standards are labeled "Reserved." This label implies either that information has been deleted from the previous version of the standard or that additions to the standard are anticipated. Because standards often reference other standards, it is important that paragraph numbers remain consistent.

### Section 1910.25(a) -- Application of Requirements

This section is intended to prescribe rules and establish minimum requirements for the construction, care, and use of the common types of portable wood ladders, in order to insure safety under normal conditions of usage. Other types of special ladders, fruitpicker's ladders, combination step and extension ladders, stockroom step ladders, aisle-way step ladders, shelf ladders, and library ladders are not specifically covered by this section.

### Section 1910.25(b) -- Materials

#### 1910.25(b)(1) -- Requirements Applicable to All Wood Parts

(i) -- All wood parts shall be free from sharp edges and splinters; sound and free, by accepted visual inspection, from shake, wane, compression failures, decay, or other irregularities. Low density wood shall not be used.

### Section 1910.25(c) -- Construction Requirements

1910.25(c)(1) -- [Reserved]

### 1910.25(c)(2) -- Portable Stepladders.

Stepladders longer than 20 feet shall not be supplied. Stepladders as hereinafter specified shall be of three types:

Type I -- Industrial stepladder, 3 to 20 feet for heavy duty, such as utilities, contractors, and industrial use.

Type II -- Commercial stepladder, 3 to 12 feet for medium duty, such as painters, offices, and light industrial use.

Type III -- Household stepladder, 3 to 6 feet for light duty, such as light household use.

### (i) -- General Requirements

(A) -- [Reserved]

(B) -- A uniform step spacing shall be employed which shall be not more than 12 inches. Steps shall be parallel and level when the ladder is in position for use.

(C) -- The minimum width between side rails at the top, inside to inside, shall be not less than 11 1/2 inches. From top to bottom, the side rails shall spread at least 1 inch for each foot of length of stepladder.

(D)-(E) -- [Reserved]

(F) -- A metal spreader or locking device of sufficient size and strength to securely hold the front and back sections in open positions shall be a component of each stepladder. The spreader shall have all sharp points covered or removed to protect the user. For Type III ladder, the pail shelf and spreader may be combined in one unit (the so-called shelf-lock ladder).

### 1910.25(c)(3) -- Portable Rung Ladders

(i) -- [Reserved]

(ii) -- **Single Ladder.** Single ladders longer than 30 feet shall not be supplied.

(iii) -- **Two-section Ladder.** Two-section extension ladders longer than 60 feet shall not be

supplied. All ladders of this type shall consist of two sections, one to fit within the side rails of the other, and arranged in such a manner that the upper section can be raised and lowered.

**(iv) -- Sectional Ladder.** Assembled combinations of sectional ladders longer than lengths specified in this subdivision shall not be used.

**(v) -- Trestle and Extension Trestle Ladder.** Trestle ladders, or extension sections or base sections of extension trestle ladders longer than 20 feet shall not be supplied.

#### **1910.25(c)(4) -- Special-purpose Ladders**

**(i) --** [Reserved]

**(ii) -- Painter's Stepladder.** Painter's stepladders longer than 12 feet shall not be supplied.

**(iii) -- Mason's Ladder.** A mason's ladder is a special type of single ladder intended for use in heavy construction work. Mason's ladders longer than 40 feet shall not be supplied.

#### **1910.25(c)(5) -- Trolley and Side-rolling Ladders**

**(i) -- Length.** Trolley ladders and side-rolling ladders longer than 20 feet should not be supplied.

### **Section 1910.25(d) -- Care and Use of Ladders**

**1910.25(d)(1) -- Care.** To insure safety and serviceability the following precautions on the care of ladders shall be observed:

**(i) --** Ladders shall be maintained in good condition at all times, the joint between the steps and side rails shall be tight, all hardware and fittings securely attached, and the movable parts shall operate freely without binding or undue play.

**(ii) --** Metal bearings of locks, wheels, pulleys, etc., shall be frequently lubricated.

**(iii) --** Frayed or badly worn rope shall be replaced.

**(iv) --** Safety feet and other auxiliary equipment shall be kept in good condition to insure proper performance.

**(v)-(ix) --** [Reserved]

**(x) --** Ladders shall be inspected frequently and those which have developed defects shall be withdrawn from service for repair or destruction and tagged or marked as "Dangerous, Do Not Use."

**(xi) --** Rungs should be kept free of grease and oil.

**1910.25(d)(2) -- Use.** The following safety precautions shall be observed in connection with the use of ladders:

**(i) --** Portable rung and cleat ladders shall, where possible, be used at such a pitch that the horizontal distance from the top support to the foot of the ladder is one-quarter of the working length of the ladder (the length along the ladder between the foot and the top support). The ladder shall be so placed as to prevent slipping, or it shall be lashed, or held in position. Ladders shall not be used in a horizontal position as platforms, runways, or scaffolds;

**(ii) --** Ladders for which dimensions are specified should not be used by more than one man at a time nor with ladder jacks and scaffold planks where use by more than one man is anticipated. In such cases, specially designed ladders with larger dimensions of the parts should be procured;

**(iii) --** Portable ladders shall be so placed that the side rails have a secure footing. The top rest for portable rung and cleat ladders shall be reasonably rigid and shall have ample strength to support the applied load;

**(iv) --** Ladders shall not be placed in front of doors opening toward the ladder unless the door is blocked upon, locked, or guarded;

**(v) --** Ladders shall not be placed on boxes, barrels, or other unstable bases to obtain additional height;

**(vi)-(vii) --** [Reserved]

(viii) -- Ladders with broken or missing steps, rungs, or cleats, broken side rails, or other faulty equipment shall not be used; improvised repairs shall not be made;

(ix) -- Short ladders shall not be spliced together to provide long sections;

(x) -- Ladders made by fastening cleats across a single rail shall not be used;

(xi) -- Ladders shall not be used as guys, braces, or skids, or for other than their intended purposes;

(xii) -- Tops of the ordinary types of stepladders shall not be used as steps;

(xiii) -- On two-section extension ladders the minimum overlap for the two sections in use shall be as shown in Table 1:

**Table 1.** Overlap required for two-section extension ladders of various lengths.

Size of ladder (feet)	Overlap (feet)
Up to and including 36	3
Over 36 up to and including 48	4
Over 48 up to and including 60	5

(xiv) -- Portable rung ladders with reinforced rails (see paragraphs (c)(3) (ii)(c) and (iii)(d) this section) shall be used only with the metal reinforcement on the under side;

(xv) -- No ladder should be used to gain access to a roof unless the top of the ladder shall extend at least 3 feet above the point of support, at eave, gutter, or roofline;

(xvi) -- [Reserved]

(xvii) -- Middle and top sections of sectional or window cleaner's ladders should not be used for bottom section unless the user equips them with safety shoes;

(xviii) -- [Reserved]

(xix) -- The user should equip all portable rung ladders with nonslip bases when there is a hazard of

slipping. Nonslip bases are not intended as a substitute for care in safely placing, lashing, or holding a ladder that is being used upon oily, metal, concrete, or slippery surfaces;

(xx) -- The bracing on the back legs of step ladders is designed solely for increasing stability and not for climbing.