Know Your Portable Ladders

Got a portable ladder in the workplace? In addition to the general requirements for ladders found in OSHA Standard 1910.23(b), the following section 1910.23(c) spells out specific requirements for portable ladders.

Some of these requirements are easily met by having ladders manufactured to common industry specifications. For instance, consider these requirements –

- Rungs and steps of portable metal ladders are corrugated, knurled, dimpled, coated with skid-resistant material, or otherwise treated to minimize the possibility of slipping.
- Each stepladder or combination ladder used in a stepladder mode is equipped with a metal spreader or locking device that securely holds the front and back sections in an open position while the ladder is in use.

Other requirements are those that speak to proper use of the portable ladder. OSHA Standard 1910.23(c) specifies that –

1. Ladders are not loaded beyond the maximum intended load
2. Ladders are used only on stable and level surfaces unless they are secured or stabilized to prevent accidental displacement
3. No ladder is moved, shifted, or extended while an employee is on it
4. Ladders placed in locations such as passageways, doorways, or driveways where they can be displaced by other activities or traffic: (1) Are secured to prevent accidental displacement; or (2) Are guarded by a temporary barricade, such as a row of traffic cones or caution tape, to keep the activities or traffic away from the ladder
5. The cap (if equipped) and top step of a stepladder are not used as steps
6. Portable ladders used on slippery surfaces are secured and stabilized
7. The top of a non-self-supporting ladder is placed so that both side rails are supported, unless the ladder is equipped with a single support attachment
8. Portable ladders used to gain access to an upper landing surface have side rails that extend at least 3 feet (0.9 m) above the upper landing surface
9. Ladders and ladder sections are not tied or fastened together to provide added length unless they are specifically designed for such use
10. Ladders are not placed on boxes, barrels, or other unstable bases to obtain additional height

Follow this link to find OSHA Standard 1910.23, Ladders.