

INTRODUCTION

In many homes and businesses, employees may use a step stool to reach a place that is a little out of reach. Step stools come a variety of styles depending on what is needed by the user. Improper use of a step stool could potentially expose employees to harm. Following the safe work practices presented in this lesson will help ensure employee safety.



WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A STEP STOOL AND STEP LADDER?

For many employees, the term step stool or step ladder may be used interchangeably, even though these are two different products. It is easy to see why the terms are interchanged as they can look similar to each other.

Step Ladder: A self-supporting ladder has a similar appearance to a two-sided ladder. It has treads or steps, usually with four or more steps, rather than rungs. A step ladder will be taller than a step stool. This makes it appropriate for outdoor use. The step ladder can come in many design types such as single-sided, twin, multi-position, and foldable. A step ladder may have a duty rating of Type I, Type IA, or Type IAA.



Step Stool: A step stool has the appearance of a stool with V shaped legs. A stool may have 1,2,3, or 4 steps, depending on the style and design. A step stool can be foldable or non-foldable and comes in a variety of sizes and looks. The design of a step stool makes it appropriate for indoor use. The stool may have a duty rating of Type I, Type II, or Type III with weight limits of 200, 225, or 250 pounds.



TYPES OF STEP STOOLS

Step stools can be made of aluminum, fiberglass, stainless steel, or molded plastic. They can range in size and styles, such as a single-step stool which can be used to give the person a bit more height and is meant for light chores like reaching into a cabinet to three or four step stools that are used for tasks such as cleaning ceilings or painting.



HAZARDS

When using a step stool, employees could potentially be exposed to some of the following hazards:

- Slipping, tripping, or falling
- Stools breaking or collapsing





STEP STOOL SAFETY

SAFE WORK PRACTICES

Before using a step stool, employees should do the following:

- Inspect the step stool for damage. Report a damaged step stool to your supervisor. Do NOT use a damaged step stool. It is recommended that damaged step stools be removed from the work area.
- Ensure that the floor is dry and free of spills. Clean up any spills prior to using the stool.
- It is recommended that employees wear slip-resistant shoes when using a step stool.

When using a step stool, employees should do the following:

- Use the appropriate stool for the job.
- Ensure that the step stool is placed on a firm, level surface.
- Ensure that the step stool is spread fully open and the spreaders locked (if applicable).
- Ensure the step or steps are free of any water, mud, grease, oil, or any other slippery liquid. Clean steps as needed.
- Keep step stools dry and clean.
- Always face the step stool when ascending or descending.
- Ensure that both feet are on the stool.
- Ensure that the step stool has been set-up close to where the work needs to be performed.
- Keep your body in the middle of the step stool.
- Store the step stool in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

When using a step stool, employees should NOT do the following:

- Do NOT climb on a damaged, bent, or broken stool.
- Do NOT place a step stool on other objects such as boxes or other unstable bases for additional height.
- Do NOT use a partially opened step stool (if applicable).
- Do NOT use a step stool on a slippery surface.
- Do NOT overreach while on a step stool.
- Do NOT store items on top of a step stool.
- Do NOT store a step stool in locations with excessive heat or chemical vapors.
- Do NOT attempt to move the stool while standing on it.
- Do NOT lean backward while moving objects when standing on a step stool.
- Do NOT rise up on your toes when reaching for objects.

CONCLUSION

Step stools can be convenient tools for reaching items that may be a little higher than a person can naturally reach. The improper use of a step stool could result in a fall or the collapsing of the stool. By following the safe work practices presented in this lesson, employees can help minimize the chances of an accident occurring when using a step stool.

