

# November 2024

- [2024-11-04 TBT The Dos and Donts of Portable Ladders](#)
- [2024-11-11 Excavation Avoiding Ground Level Hazards](#)
- [2024-11-18 Using Slings for Lifting](#)
- [2024-11-25 Things to know about Double Insulated Tools](#)

# 2024-11-04 TBT The Dos and Donts of Portable Ladders

Many of the most common accidents that occur when we use a portable step ladder can be avoided by observing the following tips:

DO's . . .

- Always inspect your portable step ladder before use, and take it out of service if there is any deficiency found that affects its safe use.
- Make sure all four feet of the portable step ladder are set on a level and stable surface, and that both ladder spreaders are fully extended and locked into place before use.
- Keep your ladder, your body, your tools and any materials at least 10 feet away from energized electrical conductors (or even further for higher voltages exceeding 50kv).
- Always make sure at least one of your hands is firmly grasping a rung or side rail when you are climbing up or down a ladder. And be aware that just sliding your hand along a side rail as you ascend or descend the ladder does NOT constitute "grasping" the ladder.
- Maintain your balance and center of gravity on your portable step ladder by keeping your belt-buckle between the two side rails. Reposition the ladder instead of over-reaching.

DO NOT's . . .

- Never use a portable step ladder for purposes for which it was not designed. For example, do not lean a closed portable step ladder against a wall or other surface for the purpose of climbing, or stand on one that has been placed across objects in a horizontal position.
- Do not use a portable step ladder made of metal or any other conductive materials when performing any task or working in an area where you, your tools or materials, or the ladder could make contact with energized electrical conductors or equipment.
- Never climb up or down a portable step ladder while carrying any object that prevents you from firmly grasping the ladder with at least one hand - or that could cause you to lose your balance.
- Do not place any tools or materials on the top cap or any step of your ladder that might fall and strike someone if the ladder were to be bumped or inadvertently moved.
- Never stand on the top cap of a regular portable step ladder, or on the top step. Always follow the ladder manufacturer's rules and warning stickers for proper standing surfaces. While these are not the only precautions and prohibitions applicable to the use of a portable step ladder, heeding these simple tips can go a long ways towards protecting all of us who do use them from accidents, injuries, and even death. applicable to the use of a portable step ladder, heeding these simple tips can go a long ways towards protecting all of us who do use them from accidents, injuries, and even death.

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# 2024-11-11 Excavation

## Avoiding Ground Level Hazards

Most people are mindful that work taking place inside an excavation can be extremely dangerous. Cave-ins, striking an underground utility line, or being exposed to a hazardous atmosphere are just a few of the potential hazards that could injure someone working within an excavation. However, there are many hazards located on or above the surface of the earth at excavation sites that could harm workers as well. So today we will discuss some of the dangers associated with trenching and excavation work that are present on or above the ground, and how we can avoid them.

- Always look above where you will be digging to see if there are any electrical lines hanging overhead. Because our focus is usually directed downward while we dig, it is easy to accidentally raise a backhoe bucket or long section of pipe into an energized electrical line. If any overhead electric lines are present, it may be necessary to have them de-energized or insulated to prevent electrocution, so check with the Competent Person or your Supervisor.
- Identify any encumbrances present on the surface that could present a potential safety hazard once excavation begins. A large boulder located next to an excavation could roll and fall into the excavation if the soil collapses from beneath. And trees, utility poles, and communication equipment poles located adjacent to the edge of an excavation could also fall over and strike someone standing nearby as the soil near them is being excavated. So always check with the excavation site's competent person to see if it is necessary to first relocate any surface encumbrances or secure them in place with bracing before digging begins.
- Always make sure you and your co-workers are easily seen by equipment operators and vehicle drivers in the area. Always wear your high visibility vest or similar garments. And follow company / organizational policy regarding use of traffic control devices and flaggers where required to avoid being struck by a vehicle when working near roadways.
- Keep your distance from excavation equipment equipped with buckets, such as front-end loaders, backhoes and excavators, as the bucket can strike you as it is raised, lowered, or makes a sudden swing. Never assume the equipment operator sees you standing nearby. And also avoid standing or walking directly behind any vehicle or piece of earth-moving equipment because the operator's vision may be blocked when backing up.
- Avoid standing next to any trailers, dump beds, or roll-off containers as they are being loaded or unloaded to avoid being struck by hazards such as soil spillage or other falling materials, rolling pipes, or wheeled excavation equipment. Never stand or walk on any sidewalk, slab, or foundation where the soil beneath has been excavated unless your supervisor or competent person has given you the okay to do so. In some cases, underpinning or shores may have to be installed to support these structures, so they do not

collapse when someone stands on top of them.

While these are not the only above-ground hazards to avoid on trenching and excavation sites, they do represent some common causes of worker injuries and deaths. So keep these tips in mind.

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# 2024-11-18 Using Slings for Lifting

A sling is a type of device manufactured specifically to lift and move heavy loads, such as construction materials or machinery. It consists of a length of sturdy material, such as nylon webbing, wire rope, or chain, with loops or hooks at each end. The sling is attached to the load to be lifted, and attached to a hoisting mechanism, such as a crane or winch.

There are several different types of slings available, including single-leg slings, multi-leg slings, and adjustable.

Single-leg slings have only one leg, while multi-leg slings have two or more legs that come together at a central point, such as a lifting eye. Adjustable slings can be adapted to fit the size of the load being lifted.

Here are some general guidelines for using a sling for lifting:

- Always determine the weight and size of the load to be lifted. This will help make sure you choose a sling with adequate strength and length for the job.
- Select the appropriate sling for the load and hoisting mechanism. Make sure the sling is rated for the weight of the load and configuration used and is made of a material suitable for the job.
- Inspect the sling for any damage or wear. Look for frayed edges, cuts, burns, broken wires or stitching, or other damage that could compromise the strength of the sling. Also make sure tags displaying the sling's lifting capacity are attached and legible. NEVER use a damaged sling.
- Position the sling around the load. Make sure the sling is evenly distributed around the load, and that it is not twisted or tangled. Protect the sling from sharp edges on the load when necessary.
- Attach the hooks or loops of the sling to the hoisting mechanism. Make sure the hooks are securely fastened and that the sling is positioned so the load is properly balanced.
- Test the load before lifting. Gently tug on the sling to make sure it and the load are secure.
- Slowly lift the load using the hoisting mechanism. Make sure to keep the load level and stable.
- Move the load to the desired location. Use the hoisting mechanism to carefully move the load to its destination. Use a tag line, when necessary, to maintain safe clearance from the moving load.
- Lower the load. Slowly lower the load to the ground or support surface, making sure to keep it level and stable. Do not let the load crush the sling on the ground or cribbing.
- Disconnect the sling from the hoisting mechanism and remove it from the load. Carefully disconnect and remove the sling from around the load.

**Do not use the hoist to pull the sling from under the load.** Return it to its designated storage area when done. It's important to follow all applicable manufacturer's safety guidelines when using a sling for lifting. It's also necessary for inexperienced workers to have a trained

operator or supervisor on hand to oversee the lifting process and ensure that it is done safely and efficiently.

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# 2024-11-25 Things to know about Double Insulated Tools

In a previous toolbox talk we discussed why we should never use a tool or extension cord when the grounding pin on the plug has been damaged or removed. However, you are probably aware that not all tools are made with a grounding pin on the plug; instead, it may have only two prongs on the plug, with one being a little wider than the other (refer to the handout for an example). But that does not necessarily mean the tool is unsafe to use, it could be a double insulated tool.

As we discussed before, many hand tools and other pieces of equipment that are equipped with electrical cords are manufactured with casings or housings made from metal or other materials that conduct electricity. And if one of the insulated conductor wires encased within the power cord becomes loose inside the tool or equipment, it could touch the casing or housing and cause it to become energized. Subsequently, anyone who then touches that energized tool or equipment's casing or housing could be electrocuted.

But a double insulated tool is made differently. It does not have a casing or housing made from conductive material. Instead, it is made of plastic or some other material that does not conduct electricity. This extra layer of electrical insulation provided by the non-conductive casing or housing negates the need for a grounding wire and prong on the power cord. You can tell if the tool you are using is a double-insulated variety. Just look at the manufacturer's data plate or sticker affixed to the tool, and if it is double insulated and you may see the words "Double Insulated" printed there. Or you may see the international symbol for a double insulated tool on the label; it is a "square-within-a-square" symbol (refer to handout for an example).

And in many cases, you may see both the wording and the box-in-box symbol displayed on the label. But don't think for a minute that using a double insulated tool means you are always going to be protected from electrocution. That is because any breach in the tool's plastic casing or housing creates a potential pathway for electricity to travel through and make contact with your skin. Such conditions can occur if the tool casing or housing is cracked, which can happen if the tool is dropped onto a hard surface. A breach can also occur if any screws or other fasteners that hold the casing or housing parts together become loose and allow them to separate. So always inspect your tools and equipment to make sure their casings and housings are free of damage and secured tightly in place. And if you do happen to come across any tool or equipment with a casing or housing that is damaged or loose, do not use it! Also do not use make-shift fixes such as wrapping the tool casing or housing with electrical tape. Instead, take that tool out of service right away and turn it in to your supervisor or a safety representative.

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