Is This the Right Way to Use a Ladder?

What’s wrong with this picture?



The ladder arrangement—metal ladders stacked on a bucket—in this photo would actually be considered a “scaffold,” i.e., a temporary elevated platform and supporting structure used to support workers, by OSHA (under Sec. 1910.21(f)(27)). And according

to OSHA rules (Sec. 1910.28(a)(2)), scaffold footing or anchorage must be “sound, rigid and capable of carrying the maximum intended load *without settling or displacement*” (emphasis added).

Moral: Don’t use buckets or other unstable objects like barrels, boxes, bricks or concrete blocks to support scaffolds. Even more to the point, don’t let *your workers* construct makeshift scaffolds out of ladders that can get them killed and expose you to OSHA citations.

SAFE USE OF LADDERS: 3 Reasons to Pay Attention

1. 14 of 100 American workers killed on the job each year die in falls
2. 38% of *construction* workers deaths are caused by falls
3. Misuse of ladders—such as using a portable ladder anchored by a bucket to create a makeshift scaffold like the worker in the photo—is a leading cause of workplace falls

5 BASIC TYPES OF LADDERS

Ladders come in different shapes and sizes. The most common types include:
1. Step Ladders: Self-supporting ladders that don’t have to be leaned against a type of support.



2. Extension Ladders: AKA “straight ladders,” typically include a main piece called the “base” and a second moveable piece called the “fly” that can be lifted higher than the base.



3. Platform Ladders: Front step ladders that have a platform as the top step:



4. Fixed Ladders: Ladders that are permanently attached to the side of a building, tank or other structure:



5. Scaffolds: Temporary elevated platforms with a supporting structure used to support workers, which can be made of ladders like the one in the photo (a common form is the so-called “ladder jack scaffold”:



8 LADDER USE DO’s & DON’Ts

There are 8 things to do/not do when using a ladder of any kind:

DO inspect the ladder before using it

DON’T use a ladder that’s broken, corroded or not working properly

DO ensure that ladders are anchored on a firm, solid surface—a bucket doesn’t qualify!

DON’T tie together ladders to make them longer or to make makeshift scaffolds like the worker in the photo

DO ensure stepladders are fully opened before climbing on them

DON’T use a stepladder as a straight ladder

DO ensure the ladder is set up in a location where it won’t be jostled or moved while you’re using it

DON’T use ladders when it’s very windy