

Ladders may be the most common equipment in any work environment. Not only are ladders commonplace in the workplace but they are also an important tool used around your home. Because ladders are a mainstay of business it's good business sense to have a formal program in place.

Manufactures of ladders have developed safety standards for safe use of their product. These safety standards provide key elements for any ladder program. A key component to the safe use of ladders is to have competent trained people who can assist the employee with meeting basic safety standards.

The OSHA Construction Standard (1926.32(f)) defines a competent person as someone who is:

- capable of identifying existing and predictable hazards in the surroundings, or
- working conditions which are unsanitary, hazardous, or dangerous to employees, and
- has authorization to take prompt corrective measures to eliminate them.



Do you have a Competent Person to Manage the Safe Use of Ladders?

- To meet the definition of “CAPABLE”, a competent person would first have to be KNOWLEDGEABLE; therefore training would be a prerequisite to being recognized as a competent person. Training MUST include sufficient knowledge regarding multiple aspects of ladders. For example, part of the training would incorporate safe use, inspection, hazards associated with ladders, and proper storage.
- Competent persons should be able to determine or predict hazards associated with the ladders in specific environments. Examples would be setting up a ladder on slippery surfaces or near electrical lines. A second common hazard is not having the correct ladder to safely reach the height needed to perform the work. This requires the competent person have the ability to ensure by planning to have the right ladder for the job.
- AUTHORIZATION to take action is an endorsement given by the employer to the competent person. The employer is confident that the competent person(s) is adequately trained and fully understands the hazards associated with ladder use. The competent person is mandated by the employer to prevent unsafe acts and conditions via inspections, coaching, and enforcing proper use of ladders.
- The competent person is tasked as a backstop by the employer to establish safety training and complete inspections and take responsibility to eliminate hazardous acts and conditions involving ladders.