

### INTRODUCTION

BS EN 131 is now the single British and European product standard covering most types of portable ladders and steps, for use throughout the UK. This replaces BS 2037, BS 1129 and previous versions of EN131. The new standard incorporates two classes of ladder, 'Professional' and 'Non-Professional' of which only 'Professional' class should be used in the workplace.

The new standard provides ladders with more strength and durability than previous specifications (see below) but requires that all 'leaning ladders' longer than 3.0m, must also be wider at their base to provide more stability when in use.

Unfortunately, this feature makes them totally unsuitable for use on most types of scaffolding, as the increased base dimension will generally require wider access holes through working platforms, thus increasing the risk of falls and when used within the relative confines of a scaffold platform, provides potential and unacceptable trip hazards at the ladder base.

This standard does not therefore cater for ladders required to provide access and egress within scaffolds, which by their design and instructions are intended for and limited to 'specific professional use' only. This document therefore aims to provide guidance for buyers, hire and sale specialists and ladder manufacturers regarding the essential requirements for scaffold ladders.

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

The Work at Height Regulations 2005 requires that:

- Work equipment is appropriate to the nature of work to be performed and the foreseeable loadings. (Regulation 7).
- A ladder shall be so positioned as to ensure its stability during use (Schedule 6).
- A portable ladder shall be prevented from slipping during use by (a) securing the stiles at or near their upper or lower ends; (b) an effective anti-slip or other effective stability device; or (c) any other arrangement of equivalent effectiveness (Schedule 6).

The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (Regulation 4) requires that:

- Work equipment is so constructed or adapted as to be suitable for the purpose for which it is used or provided.

The HSE published ACOP and Guidance document, L22, 'Safe Use of Work Equipment', also requires that equipment must be suitable by design, construction or adaptation for the actual work it is provided to do. This means that if work equipment is adapted, it must still be suitable for its intended purpose.

All ladders used to provide access and egress within scaffolding must therefore be suitably prevented from slipping during use, by securing the stiles at or near their upper and/or lower ends, alleviating the need for additional width at the base for stability. See Figure 1.



Figure 1 Methods of securing a ladder with rope, suitable ties or ladder clamps.

At such times when it will not be reasonably practicable to maintain ladder ties, i.e. when a person has to climb a ladder for the purpose of fixing or removing ties, it must at all times be suitably restrained by other means (e.g. by being firmly footed by another person).

## SPECIFICATION

Ladders used to provide access and egress within scaffolding structures should conform to the following requirements:

### BS EN 131 Professional Classification \*excluding clause 4.2 b2

Comply with: BS EN 131-1:2015 + A1:2019\*

BS EN 131-2:210 + A2:2017

BS EN 131-3:2018

The testing centre should have 3rd party accreditation by a UKAS registered test facility.

## MARKING REQUIREMENTS

Scaffold ladders should be indelibly marked (with labels or other suitable means) to specify:

- BS EN 131 PROFESSIONAL (Excluding clause 4.2 b2)
- 'For Scaffold Use Only'.
- Instructions to ensure that, when in use, the ladder is at all times suitably supported and restrained.
- Instructions for safe use.
- Correct angle of erection.
- Maximum number of users allowed on the ladder at any one time.
- Identity and address of the manufacturer.

- Month and year of production and serial number.
- Maximum total load.
- Weight of ladder after production.

### PREVIOUS LADDER STANDARDS

With the introduction of the current EN131 standard, the following standards, used for the manufacture of ladders, are now obsolete and have been withdrawn:

Timber Ladders	BS 1129:1990 Class 1 Industrial Duty.
Aluminium Ladders	BS 2037:1994 Class 1 Industrial Duty.
Steel Ladders	BS EN 131-2:2010 Trade Duty.

*Ladders manufactured to these standards may continue to be used, provided that they are in good condition.*

### REFERENCES, FURTHER GUIDANCE AND READING

BS EN 131-1:2015 + A1:2019 Ladders Part 1: Terms types and functional sizes.

BS EN 131-2:210 + A2:2017 Ladders Part 2: Testing.

BS EN 131-3:2018 Ladders Part 3: Marking and user instructions.

TG20 Operational Guide. A comprehensive guide to good practice for tube and fitting scaffolding.

SG25 Access and Egress from Scaffolds via Ladders and Stair Towers etc

*Whilst every effort has been made to provide reliable and accurate information, we would welcome any corrections to information provided by the author which may not be entirely accurate, therefore and for this reason, the NASC or indeed the author cannot accept any responsibility for any misinformation posted.*

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