

Frequently asked questions and answers on changes to the EN 131-4 standard for hinged ladders

Question: How long must hinged ladders be to require a wider base?

Answer:

Hinged ladders must comply with the design specifications contained in EN 131 Part 1. The requirement states that all ladders which can be used as leaning ladders and are longer than 3m in extended state must be equipped with a wider base.

Question: How do manufacturers comply with the required wider base for hinged ladders longer than three meters?

Answer:

The crossbar is the most common solution to comply with the increased stability required by the changed standard. The conical ladder design is also possible in the required width. However, both solutions are impractical in workday scenarios (especially for transporting or storing ladders). Hymer-Leichtmetallbau offers a space-saving solution that complies with the standard: the telescopic ladders 4142 and 8142 with folding stabilisers.

Question: How is the width of the required wider base calculated?

Answer:

$(0.1 \times \text{ladder length in extended state}) + \text{outer ladder width}$

The required width of the wider base therefore varies depending on the ladder length in leaning position. However, the maximum width of the required wider base is 1200mm.

Question: Is there an obligation to retrofit existing ladders which are made according to the previous standard and which have no wider base?

Answer:

No. Ladders which were manufactured according to the old standard do not automatically become unsafe when a new standard appears and may therefore continue to be used. Companies which use ladders commercially must decide for themselves by conducting a risk analysis which work equipment is safe for its purposes and for use by their employees.

Question: Can existing hinged ladders be retrofitted with bars or stabilisers and do they then comply with the new standard?

Answer:

Although there is no obligation to retrofit existing hinged ladders, Hymer-Leichtmetallbau offers folding stabilisers as a self-mounting retrofit kit for all companies who want to ensure the stability of existing HYMER telescopic ladders 4042 or 8042 so that they comply with the new requirements.

However, even after a retrofit, these ladders do not automatically comply with all the requirements of the new standards as the changes to Part 4 of EN 131 for hinged ladders do not only refer to a wider base. Besides design changes, the new test requirements must be met. Without undergoing tests, it cannot be ensured that ladders built to the old standard will comply with the new requirements.

Question: How can I recognise that a ladder is suitable for professional or non-professional use?

Answer:

Before changes took place to EN 131 Part 4, hinged ladders were required to comply with the test specifications contained in EN 131 Part 2. This part required material strength tests to be conducted on the ladders in their position of use:

- Load of 2250 N (approx. 229 kg) for ladders intended for non-professional use.
- Load of 2700 N (approx. 275 kg) for ladders intended for professional use.

Ladders must endure these test loads for one minute without failure. After the test, they may not show any fractures or visible cracks.

NEW: With ladders having several pairs of hinged joints, the test load must be applied to the top two hinged joints.

It must be possible to recognise whether a ladder is intended for non-professional or professional use by an obligatory identification on the stile.



Ladders for professional use



Ladders for non-professional use

Question: May a professional user only use ladders of a class intended for professional use?

Answer:

The decision by a professional user which ladder class he selects for his work equipment remains the sole responsibility of the entrepreneur taken on the basis of a risk analysis. However, due to the higher loads occurring in professional use, it is extremely advisable to use only professional ladders.



Question: May a retailer continue to sell hinged ladders which he may still have in stock and which were manufactured according to the old standard?

Answer:

Yes. Basically, the changes to the standard do not apply to the retail trade. Ladders which were manufactured according to the old standard do not automatically become unsafe when a new standard appears and may therefore continue to be used. Ladders in stock manufactured according to the old standard may continue to be sold by the retail trade without concern.

Question: How can I recognise that a hinged ladder is manufactured according to the latest standard?

Answer:

The manufacturer is obliged to indicate on the product sticker the standard used to manufacture the ladder. If no date is specified when the standard was issued on the product sticker, the ladder must always comply with the latest version of the standard.

Question: After the new standard comes into force, may new hinged ladders be brought into circulation even if they do not comply with EN 131-4?

Answer:

Basically, products may be brought into circulation if they do not comply with an existing standard. However, the manufacturer is responsible for the safety of these products and must ensure that no danger ensues for the user.
