

Access Ladder

Does Your Commercial Job Require an Access Ladder?

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How close did you look at those drawings before you quoted the job? Did you see that funny looking access ladder on the outside of the building? Alternatively, did you catch that obscure little drawing on the inside of the building going up to the ladder hatch you are going to install on the roof deck? You've started the job, are about 2-3 days from completion, look at the drawing and all of a sudden see that funny looking ladder going up the side of the building. Or, did you think you'd just pick one up from your local roofing supplier whenever you needed it?

After the panic attack subsides a little, you pick up the phone to see how many and what sizes your roofing wholesaler carries of those in stock. After he finishes laughing at you and explains the fact that access ladders are not stock items at any roofing yard, the real panic sets in that you are not going to be able to finish your job within the contract period.

Outside access ladders are a specialty item that are usually "custom made-to-order." They are usually made out of either painted steel or aluminum. There is a whole area of OSHA regulating design criteria depending on the ladder length, method of access from the bottom and top, etc. The various manufacturers are familiar with these regulations and will incorporate them into the design they will have to submit to you for your approval before they can begin construction.

Know What Style. There are also several design styles: with or without boarding rails, boarding rails and cage; locking security hatch; security door only, etc. You'll have to review this with your customer to

determine their needs for the building and security requirements before you can have one built.

Know How Long. When getting a quote for an access ladder you'll need to know 1: total height from ground to top of roof edge; 2: whether ladder sits on the ground or needs to be above ground (how many inches/feet off of the ground); 3: will require boarding rails or not (are usually preferred); and 4: type of roof edge: i.e.; parapet, flat, etc., from the access ladder.

Time. Plan on at least 7-14 days from design request to final construction. The manufacturer has to design the ladder (per OSHA specs), then send you a drawing for your approval. You should allow time to review the design with your customer so you get a sign-off on the design, too. There may be an additional 2-5 days to allow for shipping to the job location if you are not local to the manufacturer.

Inside ladders are usually a lot simpler to deal with because the ladder is protected from vandals under the normal building security. Stock lengths are maintained and when ordered are merely cut to length. Again, you'll need to know the total height from ground to roof hatch access. You can usually obtain these ladders within 2-3 days. If it's an exceptionally long ladder, a safety cage may be required. Again, allow for plenty of time if it's a very long ladder for custom construction.

Outside access ladders can run from a few hundred dollars to several thousands of dollars, depending on options. Planning on getting prices and getting the construction process started early will alleviate most of the stress for you if you plan well ahead.

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