

Scaffold Safety for Construction: Access to Scaffolds

5-Minute Talk

Access to Scaffolds

Getting to and from a scaffold working surface is a critical event for your employees. This is the time most scaffold accidents happen. You must provide safe access for employees erecting or dismantling supported scaffolds.

Access rule

When a scaffold working platform is more than two feet above or below an access point to that platform, the methods in the scaffold rule at 1926.451(e) must be used to get to the platform.

Crossbraces cannot be used as a means of access to a working platform.

Methods that can be used to gain access to scaffold platforms are:

Portable, hook-on, and attachable ladders must be:

- Positioned so as not to tip the scaffold
- Specifically designed for use with the type of scaffold being used

When hook-on or attachable ladders are used on supported scaffolds more than 35 feet high, they must have rest platforms at least every 35 feet.

Note: Additional requirements for the proper construction and use of portable ladders are in Subpart X—Stairways and ladders.

Stairway-type ladders, such as ladder stands, must have:

- Rest platforms at a maximum of 12-foot intervals
- Slip-resistant treads on all steps and landings

Stairtowers (scaffold stairway/towers) must:



- Have a stairrail with toprail and midrail on each side of the stairway
- Have guardrails provided on the open sides and ends of each landing

Ramps and walkways are used extensively as a means of getting to an elevated surface. Ramps are also used for material handling equipment. Ramps and walkways must have guardrails which comply with the fall protection rule if they are six feet or more above lower levels.

Note: Employees are prohibited from working on scaffolds covered with snow, ice, or other slippery material except as necessary for removal of the material. OSHA will also apply this rule to scaffold access ramps and walkways.

Integral prefabricated scaffold access frames must:

- Be specifically designed and constructed for use as ladder rungs
- Have rest platforms at 35-foot maximum vertical intervals

Employee Training

The training requirements for the scaffold rule (1926.454) require you to ensure employees understand any other pertinent requirements of Subpart L.

Training Tips

If you are using a scaffold on the jobsite where this “5-Minute Talk” is being presented, a safety demonstration of getting to and from the working surface is a valuable tool.

Where To Go for More Information

29 CFR 1926.451(e)—Access

29 CFR 1926.454—Training

