

Scaffold Safety for Construction: Using Scaffolds

5-Minute Talk

Using Scaffolds

Working from a scaffold presents its own set of safety issues. Your employees must be trained in proper techniques and provided with the right equipment. Otherwise it can be a long way to the ground.

Working on a scaffold platform involves understanding: (1) loading and rated capacity, (2) working near power lines, (3) weather conditions, and (4) fall protection requirements. At the same time employees must concentrate on doing the project.

Maximum intended loads and rated capacities

Scaffolds and scaffold components must never be loaded in excess of their: (1) maximum intended loads—the total load of all persons, equipment, tools, materials, transmitted loads, and other loads reasonably anticipated to be applied to a scaffold or scaffold component at any one time, or (2) rated capacities—the maximum load that a hoist is allowed to lift, whichever is less.

Inspection

Scaffolds and components must be inspected as required for the type of scaffold for visible defects by a competent person or an employee with the correct level or knowledge.

Periodic inspection

OSHA does not specify how often a scaffold must be inspected. The frequency will depend upon the type of scaffold, the site, weather conditions, intensity of use, age of the equipment, and how often sections are added, removed, or changed.

Damaged scaffolds or scaffold components and capacity

Any part of a scaffold damaged or weakened for any cause shall be immediately repaired and shall not be used until repairs have been completed.



Moving scaffolds

Scaffolds that are designed to do so can be moved horizontally while employees are on them. OSHA believes that making employees climb up and down a scaffold every time it is moved could be a greater risk than remaining on a scaffold being moved under the direction of a competent person.

Weather

Employees are prohibited from working on scaffolds covered with snow, ice, and accumulated debris except to remove the hazards.

Working from scaffolds is prohibited during storms or high winds unless a competent person has determined that it is safe to do so. The employees must be protected by personal fall arrest equipment or a wind screen.

Increasing working height

Employees must never use makeshift devices, such as boxes and barrels, to increase the scaffold platform working level height. Ladders may be used on large area scaffolds to increase working height providing certain OSHA criteria is met.

Employee Training

There are no training requirements for scaffolds. You should make employees aware of pertinent safety rules for the type of scaffolding used in your facility.

Training Tips

Have your competent person go over their inspection checklist as your employees who use scaffolds observe. This will highlight the need to constantly be alert for things that just don't look right. This "preventive maintenance" could discover a problem before it turns into an accident.

Where To Go for More Information

29 CFR 1910.28—Safety requirements for all scaffolding

29 CFR 1910.29 — Manually propelled mobile ladder stands and scaffolds

