

Scaffold Safety for Construction: Access to Scaffolds

Handout

Access to Scaffolds

Getting to the work level of a scaffold has always been a serious problem. Workers, when not provided with a proper stairway or ladder, might be tempted to use crossbraces to climb the scaffold. This is strictly forbidden in the scaffold rule.

For your safety, you should observe both OSHA's rule and your company rules when getting on or off a scaffold work area.

Access to and between scaffold platforms more than two feet above or below the point of access must be made by:

Portable ladders, hook-on ladders, attachable ladders, scaffold stairways, stairway-type ladders (such as ladder stands), ramps, walkways, integral prefabricated scaffold access, or equivalent means; or by direct access from another scaffold, structure, personnel hoist, or similar surface.

Portable, hook-on, and attachable ladders — It is critical that portable, hook-on, and attachable ladders are:

- Positioned so as not to tip the scaffold
- Positioned so the bottom rung is not more than 24 inches above your starting point
- Equipped with a rest platform at 35-foot maximum vertical intervals

Stairway-type ladders must:

- Be provided with rest platforms at 12-foot intervals
- Have slip-resistant treads on all steps and landings

Stairtowers must:

- Be equipped with a stairrail consisting of a toprail (handrail) and a midrail on each side of each scaffold stairway
- Have slip-resistant surfaces on treads and landings
- Have guardrails on the open sides and ends of each landing



Ramps and walkways six feet or more above lower levels must have guardrail systems in place.

Scaffold frames that are used as access ladders must:

- Be specifically designed and constructed for use as ladder rungs
- Be uniformly spaced within each frame section

As a user of scaffolds, you are not allowed to erect or dismantle them — unless you are trained and designated to do so. However, you still must be able to recognize hazardous conditions when climbing up and down, to and from, a work surface. To totally ignore a problem is asking for trouble. Study the above OSHA rules and have a better understanding of when things do not look right. When they don't, don't climb.

Never use crossbraces to gain access to a scaffold working platform.

