

Scaffolds

Falls are one of the commonness causes of workplace accidents and injuries, and scaffolds contribute, at least indirectly, to many of these.

Avoiding scaffold accidents involves three elements:



- Proper erection and maintenance of the scaffold itself
- The provision and use of appropriate fall prevention/arrest equipment
- Following safe work practices.

Erecting the Scaffold

Many scaffold accidents are caused by using improvised scaffolding—made quickly or on the spur of the moment, or in an offhand way—such as putting one box on top of another on a steel scaffold, instead of installing two more steel bucks.

There are many types of scaffold, and although some may have unique requirements, following the most up-to-date requirements carefully is important for every type. Here are some examples:



Steel scaffolding should be erected and used in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations, making sure all connections are properly seated and locked.

Wood scaffolding must conform to safety code design and be in strict compliance with material specification and bracing. Specifications for guard-rail height, cross-bracing, and toeboards are clearly spelled out in OSHA regulations.

Free-standing towers greater in height than four times the width of the

base should be guyed. Pole scaffolds should be anchored at the designated intervals. Foundation sills should be placed under all scaffolds that are set on earth. Planks should be secured to the scaffold when left unattended.

Fall Protection

Many of the specified requirements for scaffold erection are directly aimed at preventing or at least minimizing the risk that a scaffold worker will fall. But such devices as safety belts and harnesses add protection by ensuring that if a fall does occur, it doesn't result in serious injury or death. We provide such equipment, but it will be of no help to you unless you use it.



Safe Work Practices

Before you work in or near high places, and particularly on scaffolding or with safety belts, always check the ropes, cables, chins, or other holding devices for weakness caused by accident or normal wear.

Swinging scaffolds pose particular problems of their own. It is advisable to have one person in charge of the moving up and maintenance of scaffold machines.

Another danger associated with scaffolds is that tools or materials may fall off and cause severe injury to someone below. Or debris and other objects may fall from other areas of the building onto the scaffold. Therefore:



- Hard hats should be worn by anyone working on or below the scaffold.
- Overhead protection should be provided, either on the scaffold itself or projecting from the floor of the building immediately above the scaffold.
- When deemed advisable, screening should be placed up to guardrail height to prevent materials from falling off.
- The scaffold surface must be kept in good condition, properly guarded, and clean—housekeeping is just as important there as on floors and aisleways.

- The safe use of scaffolds depends greatly on the common sense of the workers themselves. Once we've made sure the scaffolds have been erected correctly, and that fall protection gear is provided, the rest is up to you.

To be safe, work safely.