

CUSTOMER FOCUS ON LOSS CONTROL

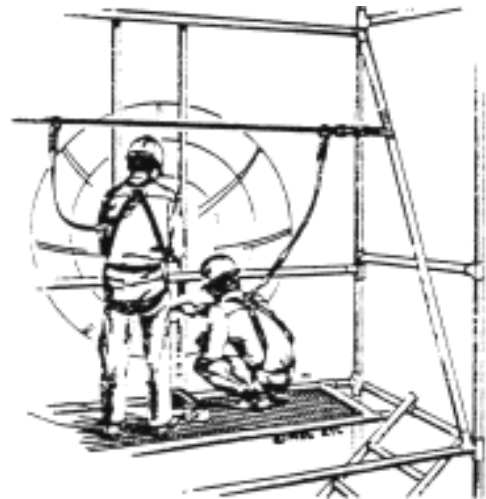
NUMBER 74

Using Scaffolds Safely

A scaffold is any temporary elevated platform and its supporting structure used for supporting people, or materials, or both. Scaffolds provide access to elevated work areas in a way that cannot be done safely by other means. Scaffolding is used in a variety of applications in new construction, renovation, maintenance, painting, etc. Scaffolds provide a safe and more comfortable work alternative than hanging from the top or working from ladders. Properly erected and maintained, scaffolding provides safe access to work locations, level working platforms, and temporary storage for tools and materials.

According to a recent study done by West Virginia University, accidents involving scaffolding are caused mainly by equipment failure, incorrect operating procedures, and environmental conditions; which cause both people and material to fall. The primary factors in accidents include failure of attachment points, parts failure, inadequate fall protection, and adverse climate conditions (such as high winds). Eighty percent of all scaffold injuries are related to falls; of those injured, 60% involve skilled trades, and 24% are laborers.

Since most scaffold accidents are related to equipment and operations, it's important that the people who use scaffolds receive training in their proper erection, inspection, maintenance, and use. The competent persons should receive additional training in scaffold selection, site conditions, hazard recognition, and protection of ground employees and the general public.



Fall protection should be required for employees when they erect, dismantle, or make alterations to scaffold systems. Many serious falls occur during these operations because the scaffolds are incomplete (and therefore, unstable). Standard rails are required on all scaffold platforms. Be sure that guard rails are removed only during on- or off-loading of materials, and be sure they are replaced immediately. Ensure that people who are working on the scaffold(s) during the time the guard rails have been removed wear fall protection.

Inspect scaffolds prior to erection, noting condition and any defects. Reject any defective parts from use until they have been properly repaired. Once a scaffold is erected, be sure to inspect it before each work shift, after any modifications are made, and especially after any change in weather conditions. After each inspection, note the time, date and the competent person's name into the job's daily work log. Provide overhead protection for people who are exposed to overhead hazards while they are working on scaffold(s). If people will be passing or working under the scaffold, provide them with adequate protection against falling objects.

Scaffolds are a cost-effective and safe method for providing temporary elevated work areas if they are in good repair, properly erected, properly maintained, and used within their design limits. Education and training will minimize many of the problems associated with scaffolds.

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