



General Safety for Supported Scaffolds

Rules for use and Working on Scaffolds

OSHA's Top 10 Violations: Scaffolding violations is the No. 3 most frequently cited workplace safety violation.

Injuries and fatalities are all too common when working on scaffolds that are not properly erected or inspected. Incidents involving scaffolding account for 4,500 workplace injuries and 50 deaths per year. Scaffolding is consistently among the top 10 most recently cited OSHA standards violations.

Supported scaffolds are defined as “platforms supported by legs, outrigger beams, brackets, poles uprights, post, frames or similar rigid support” and include:

- Light-duty wooden pole scaffolds – commonly used by carpenters, lathers, shinglers, painters, plasterers, sheet metal workers or other workers not using heavy tools or storing heavy materials on the scaffolds
- Heavy-trade wooden pole scaffolds – used by bricklayers, stonemasons, concrete workers or other workers using heavy tools or materials.

A recent fatality in California occurred when an employee fell from a scaffold. The fatality was found to be caused by ‘improperly constructed job-built scaffold.’ The scaffold was not built under the supervision of a qualified person, did not have the required 42-inch guardrail, had inadequate flooring, contained defective lumber and didn’t have properly secured bases, just to name a few of the identified deficiencies. This fatality should never have happened and can be avoided by following proper scaffold safety requirements.

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Common Scaffolding Hazards

Individuals exposed to scaffolding hazards include scaffold erectors and dismantlers, personnel working on/under scaffolds and employees and the general public near scaffolding. Common scaffolding hazards include:

Hazards from Structural Flaws	Fall Hazards	Electrical Hazards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing/improperly supported base plates • Scaffolding not tied properly to the building • Platform slope that exceeds requirement • Legs not plumb • Braces/runners/cross-bracing not secure • Missing braces/runners and cross-bracing • Planks overextended/under extended • Severe overloading/danger of collapse • Broken pins on frames 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing mid and top rails • Improper access • Platforms not fully planked or having substandard or slippery planks • Falling objects/missing toe boards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scaffolding erected too close to power lines • Ungrounded/damaged tools and equipment on platform

Scaffold hazards mainly come from parts failure, not following proper installation, inspection and dismantling procedures, failures at attachment points, inadequate fall protection, changing weather conditions and overloading of scaffolds.

Selected Cal/OSHA Regulations

Your company's code of safe practices must include safety requirements for erection, use and dismantling of scaffolds. Your injury and illness prevention program must provide information on inspection of scaffolds, correction of hazards found and training for scaffold erectors, users and dismantlers. For complete regulatory information on scaffolds refer to Cal/OSHA Title 8 Sections 1637-1667.

- The design and construction of scaffolds must conform to standards and requirements.
- Each scaffold must be designed to support its own weight and four times the maximum load.
- Scaffold erection and dismantlement must be supervised by a qualified person (defined as "one who, by possession of a recognized degree, certificate or professional standing, or who by extensive knowledge, training or experience has successfully demonstrated the ability to solve or resolve problems relating to the subject matter, the work or the project").
- A Cal/OSHA permit is required for erecting and dismantling scaffolds that exceed three stories or 36 feet in height.
- A safe and unobstructed means of access, such as walkway, stair or ladder shall be provided for all scaffold platforms.
- Anchorage and bracing shall be such that scaffolds and falsework will be prevented from swaying, tipping or collapsing.
- Manufactured planks shall be able to support their weight plus four times the live load.
- Workers on scaffolds exposed to overhead hazards shall be provided with overhead protection or other means to effectively eliminate the hazard.
- Platform must be at least 20 inches wide and shall not be sloped more than 2-to-10. Slippery platform conditions are prohibited.
- Guardrails must be 42 inches high and installed on open sides and ends of platforms.
- Toe boards are required on all railed sides of work surfaces where employees work or pass below.
- Follow height limits for wood frame/post and tube and coupler welded scaffolding.
- No work shall be done on or from scaffolds during storms or high winds.

Specific types of supported scaffolds have their own set of Cal/OSHA requirements. Partial list provided here:

- Metal scaffolds [1644]
- Tower and rolling scaffolds [1646]
- Ladder jack scaffolds [1648]
- Outrigger and bracket scaffolds [1645]
- Horse scaffolds [1647]
- Window jack scaffolds [1654]

Quick Scaffold Inspection Check for:

- ✓ Missing/damaged planks
- ✓ Missing guardrails/toeboards
- ✓ Proper access
- ✓ Proper tying off to buildings
- ✓ Clearance from electric lines
- ✓ Any overhead obstructions
- ✓ Whether the scaffold is level and plumb

Safe Work Practices

Scaffolding accidents can occur during erection, use and dismantling of scaffolds. Selection, erection and dismantling is to be performed by qualified persons. During scaffold use, the following safe work practices should be followed:

- Have scaffold inspected by a qualified person before putting into use.
- Inspect daily and before each use.
- Use scaffolds per manufacturer instructions.
- Train scaffold users on all aspects of safety.
- Do not overload scaffolds.
- Use only the safe means of access. Do not climb using railings or cross-bracing.
- Climb safely using both hands.
- Face the rungs as you climb up or down.
- Do not work on slippery rungs.
- Do not extend working heights.
- Do not remove any component of a completed scaffold except under the supervision of a qualified person.
- Keep the casters locked at all times when a rolling scaffold is not being moved.
- Train users to spot and report hazards.

Inspection and Training

Inspection and training should be conducted by a qualified person. Training must be provided to all employees who erect, disassemble, move, operate, use, repair, maintain or inspect the scaffold.

Training

All employees must be trained to recognize and control hazards associated with the type of scaffold and work task. Training should address all safe work practices and include fall hazards, falling object hazards, electrical hazards, proper use of the scaffold and handling of materials. Training must also include how to visually inspect the scaffolding. A knowledge test should be provided to participants to cement their understanding. Employers must retrain employees when inadequacies are observed or an employee lacks the skill or understanding to work around/on scaffolding equipment.

Inspections

Final inspection of scaffold building is to be done by a qualified individual. Daily pre-use inspection of the scaffold should be done by qualified person and submitted to management before each work shift. If deemed unsafe, employees are not to work on the scaffold until repairs are made. A sample scaffold pre-use daily inspection form is available.

