



Falls/Slips from Scaffolds

An estimated 72% of employees hurt while working on scaffolds* reported the accidents were caused by unsafe planking, support giving way, slipping or being struck by a falling object.

Proper staging of scaffolds is crucial to the safety of those who depend on the temporary structures to reach heights as they perform jobs. Construction workers, painters, ironworkers, laborers, carpenters and even videographers may be at risk of falling from unsafe scaffolds. Injuries in falls from scaffolds can range from sprains and broken bones to catastrophic brain injury or death.

Types of Scaffolds

There are three types of elevated, temporary work platforms called scaffolds:

- **Supported scaffolds**, which have one or more platforms supported by load-bearing poles, legs, frames and outriggers
- **Suspended scaffolds**, which use platforms suspended by ropes or other non-rigid overhead support
- **Aerial scissor lifts or tables and personnel hoists**, which may be seen as vehicles or machinery but can be regarded as another type of supported scaffold

Scaffold Hazards

- Lack of fall protection, leading to falls from elevation
- Scaffold collapse due to instability or overloading
- Being struck by falling tools, work materials or debris
- Electrocution, mostly from a scaffold being too close to nearby live power lines

Proper Scaffold Use

The use of scaffolds should include these tips from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration:

- Follow manufacturer's directions when constructing all scaffolds.
- Open sides and ends of platforms should have installed guardrail systems.
- Train workers on safe scaffold use.
- If using a scaffold more than 10 feet above a lower level, use either a guardrail system or a personal fall arrest system.
- Employees should have safe access to scaffold platforms.
- Workers should not climb the cross-braces on scaffolds as a means of access.

OSHA says approximately 2.3 million construction workers (65% of the industry) frequently work on scaffolds and proper use would prevent 4,500 injuries and 50 deaths every year, beyond the savings of \$90 million in workdays lost.

To learn more about the proper use of suspended and supported scaffolds, visit OSHA's Web-based Scaffolding eTool: <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/scaffolding/index.html>

NOTE: Currently OSHA eTool information covers only suspended and supported scaffolds; contact CopperPoint Loss Control Consultants for scaffold safety information.

Source: Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)
*Bureau of Labor and Statistics

Safety tips developed based on generally accepted safety standards believed to be reliable at the date of publication. Information is for general guidance only and should not be relied upon for legal compliance purposes.

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