

Supported Scaffolding – Basic Reminders

Scaffolding is widely used on jobsites, but it must be designed and used with care. To keep you and your employees safe, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)¹ recommends these safety tips.



Common scaffolding issues

To avoid using makeshift platforms, each job should be carefully planned. When designing your scaffolding, OSHA suggests you consider the following:

- All scaffolds must be fully planked and constructed to support the load they're designed to carry.
- Supported scaffolds' poles, legs, posts, frames, and uprights must bear on base plates and mud sills, or other adequate firm foundation.
- Scaffold planks must be cleated or secured, or extend over the end supports by at least six inches, but not by more than 12 inches.
- Ties, guys, and braces for a scaffold must be installed per the scaffold manufacturer's recommendations. Unstable objects should not be used as work platforms or to support scaffolds. Never use work platforms mounted on top of other work platforms.
- Scaffolds 10 feet or more in height should have fall protection provided. This is commonly achieved with the use of a guardrail system consisting of top-rails, mid-rails, and toe-boards.
- Falling object protection must be provided in areas where people are required to work or pass under a scaffold.
- Overhead protection is required if employees working on scaffolds are exposed to overhead hazards.

Scaffolding care and use

- Scaffolding should be inspected prior to each work shift by a competent person.
- Check guardrails, connectors, fastenings, footings, tie-ins, bracing and planking. Damaged scaffolds must be removed from service immediately.
- Keep platforms and area near the scaffold clear of debris, unneeded equipment or material, and anything else that might cause you to slip or trip.
- Only use a rolling scaffold on level surfaces, and lock caster breaks when not in motion. When moving, secure all loose materials and make certain the route is clear of holes and overhead obstructions.
- When hoisting material from the ground, control it with a tagline to prevent materials banging into and damaging scaffolds.
- Supported scaffolds with a height-to-base-width ratio of more than 4:1 must be restrained by guying, tying, bracing, or an equivalent means.

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Q&A

Here are some questions to help start conversations around the scaffolding safety in your workplace:

- How are scaffolds used on this job site?
- How will you use them safely?
- How often should a scaffold be inspected?
- What should you do if you find defects on a scaffold?
- When are guardrails required on the scaffolds used on this job site?
- When can you use the cross-bracing or end frames to climb up or down a scaffold?

For more information, please visit the **OSHA scaffolding eTools database**.

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¹ Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Standard 1926.451, 2018