

TOOLBOX TALK: SCAFFOLD SAFETY

Job or site _____

Date _____

Led by _____

Open with this

Everybody face the scaffold. Before anybody steps on it today, one person here is responsible for having looked at it. Who is that person, and when did they look?

The talk

Scaffolds get built on Monday by whoever was free and used for three weeks by everybody. That is the whole problem. The person standing on it on Thursday has no idea what the ground under the base plates looked like when it went up.

Start at the bottom. Base plates on mud sills, on ground that is compacted and level. Not on a block, not on a bucket, not on a piece of scrap plywood over soft fill. A scaffold fails from the bottom up, and it fails all at once.

Planking is the second thing. The platform is fully planked between the front upright and the guardrail. Not mostly planked. A gap you can step through is a fall, and the plank you are standing on needs to overhang its support by at least six inches and no more than twelve, or it becomes a lever.

Above ten feet you need guardrails: a top rail, a mid rail and toeboards where anybody works or passes below. The toeboard is not decoration. A dropped hammer from twenty feet is a fatality if it lands on a hard hat wrong.

Height to base ratio is four to one. Once the scaffold is four times taller than its narrowest base dimension, it has to be tied to the structure or braced. A rolling tower that is tall and narrow is the most dangerous thing on a residential site, especially with somebody still standing on it while it gets moved, which nobody does on this job.

And the access. You climb the ladder or the built in stair, not the frame end. The cross braces are not a ladder and they were never designed as one.

Point at these before anybody starts

- The base plates and mud sills, all four corners, on firm level ground
- The platform, fully planked, with no gap you could put a boot through
- Plank overhang at each end, between six and twelve inches past the support
- The guardrails and toeboards on every open side above ten feet

- The tie ins, and the height to base ratio on the tallest tower here
- The access ladder or stair, and the fact that nobody climbs the cross braces

The rules that apply

- Scaffolds are erected, moved, altered and dismantled only under the supervision of a competent person.
- A competent person inspects the scaffold before each work shift and after anything that could affect it, such as weather or a bump from equipment.
- Platforms are fully planked. Each plank overhangs its support by at least 6 inches and not more than 12 unless it is cleated or restrained.
- Guardrails on all open sides above 10 feet, with toeboards wherever anybody works or passes underneath.
- Tie, guy or brace the scaffold once the height is more than four times the minimum base dimension.
- Nobody rides a rolling scaffold while it is being moved, and the casters are locked before anybody steps on.

Ask the crew

- Who is our competent person for this scaffold, and when was it last looked at?
- What changed on this scaffold since it went up? Anything moved, removed or borrowed?
- Is there anybody working below us today, and do the toeboards cover them?

Close with this

Nobody gets on this scaffold today until it has been walked, bottom to top, by the person responsible for it.

Attendance

Everybody who was present signs, including subcontractors and anybody visiting the site.

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This talk is general safety information for a crew briefing, not legal advice and not a substitute for the training your employees are required to have. Standards are quoted for orientation only. Check the current text of the standard and your own state plan, which may be stricter than the federal rule.