


RISK CONTROL CONSULTING

The Basics of Scaffold Safety

There are thousands of scaffold-related injuries and about 40 scaffold-related deaths every year in the U.S.

Below are 12 rules to be followed for working safely:

1. A **competent person** must be available to direct workers who are constructing or moving scaffolds. The competent person must also train workers and **inspect** the scaffold and its components **before every work shift, and after any event that could affect the structural integrity of the scaffold**. The competent person must be able to identify unsafe conditions and be authorized by the employer to take action to correct unsafe conditions, to make the workplace safe. And a **qualified person**, someone who has very specific knowledge or training, must design the scaffold and its rigging.
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2. Every **supported** scaffold and its components must **support, without failure, its own weight and at least four times the intended load**. The intended load is the sum of the weights of all personnel, tools and materials that will be placed on the scaffold. Don't load the scaffold with more weight than it can safely handle.
 3. Supported scaffolds with a height to base width ration of more than four to one (4:1) shall be restrained from tipping by guying, trying, bracing, and securing every 26 feet vertically and every 30 feet horizontally.
 4. On **supported** scaffolds, working platforms/decks must be planked close to the guardrails. Planks are to be overlapped on a support at least 6 inches, but not more than 12 inches.
 4. Inspections of **supported** scaffolds must include:
 - Checking metal components for bends, cracks, holes, rust, welding splatter, pits, broken welds, and non-compatible parts.
 - Covering and securing floor openings and labeling floor opening covers.
 5. Each rope on a **suspended** scaffold must support the scaffold's weight and at least **six times** the intended load.
 6. Scaffold **platforms** must be at least **18 inches wide, (there are some exceptions)**, and guardrails and/or personal fall arrest systems must be used for fall protection any time you are working **10 feet** or more above ground level. **Guardrails** must be between 39 and 45 inches high, and **mid rails** must be installed approximately halfway between the top rail and the platform surface.
 7. OSHA Standards require that workers have fall protection when working on a scaffold 10 or more feet above the ground. OSHA requires the following:

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- The use of a guardrail OR a personal fall arrest system when working on a *supported scaffold*.
 - **BOTH** a guardrail AND a personal fall arrest system when working on a *single-point or two-point suspended scaffold*.
 - A personal fall arrest system when working on an *aerial lift*.
8. Your lifeline must be tied back to a **structural anchorage** capable of withstanding **5,000 lbs** of dead weight **per person** tied off to it. Attaching your lifeline to a guardrail, a standpipe or other piping systems will not meet the 5,000 lbs requirement and is not a safe move.
 9. Wear hard hats, and make sure there are toeboards, screens and debris nets in place **to protect other people from falling objects**.
 10. Counterweights for suspended scaffolds must be able to resist **at least four times** the tipping moment, and they must be made of materials that cannot be easily dislocated (no sand, no water, no rolls of roofing, etc.). [This would be calculated by the qualified person who designs the scaffold.]
 11. Your employer must provide safe access to the scaffold when a platform is more than two (2) feet above or below the point of access, or when you need to step across more than 14 inches to get on the platform. Climbing on cross braces is not allowed! Ladders, stair towers, ramps and walkways are some of the ways to provide safe access.
 12. All workers must be **trained** on:
 - How to use the scaffold, and how to recognize hazards associated with the type of scaffold they are working on.
 - The maximum intended load and capacity.
 - How to recognize and report defects.
 - Fall hazards, falling object hazards and any other hazards that may be encountered, including electrical hazards (such as overhead power lines).
 - Having proper fall protection systems in place.

For more information about OSHA scaffolding standards go to:
<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/scaffolding/standards.html>

This Tribal First Risk Control Consulting fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice. For more information on this topic, please contact Tribal First Risk Control Consulting at (888) 737-4752 or riskcontrol@tribalfirst.com.