

Scaffolds: Before You Climb On

About 10 minutes to deliver

What to check before you step onto a scaffold, who is allowed to change it, and why a green tag is not a guarantee.

Scaffold collapses and falls from scaffolds injure thousands of workers a year, and the causes repeat: planking short, guardrails missing, base not level, or somebody modified it who had no business doing so.

LOOK BEFORE YOU STEP ON

- The tag. Green means inspected and ready. Yellow means restrictions apply — read them. Red means do not use. No tag at all means find the competent person, not "it's probably fine."
- Fully planked. Platforms planked across the full width, planks overlapping properly and secured against uplift. Gaps swallow feet.
- Guardrails above ten feet — top rail, midrail, toeboard. Toeboards protect the person underneath as much as the person on it.
- Base. Level, on mud sills or base plates, on ground that will not soften after rain. Never on blocks, bricks or a stack of offcuts.
- Access. A stair, ladder or built-in access point. Climbing the frame is not access.
- Distance from the wall. More than 14 inches and you need fall protection on the inboard side.

WHO IS ALLOWED TO TOUCH IT

Erecting, moving, dismantling or altering a scaffold happens under the supervision of a competent person, by trained workers. Pulling one plank to fit a pipe, or dropping a guardrail "for a minute" to land material, is altering it.

If it is in your way, you ask. You do not adjust it.

WORKING ON IT

- Do not overload. Materials as well as people. Scaffolds are rated, and the rating assumes distributed load, not a pallet in one bay.
- Keep it clear. Snow, ice, mud, debris, offcuts and cords all belong somewhere else.
- Stay off in high wind and storms, and have it re-inspected afterwards.
- Ten feet from power lines for insulated lines under 300 volts, and further for anything else. Assume every line is live.

ASK THE CREW

- Does every scaffold here have a current tag, and does anyone know who inspects them?
- Has anyone had to move a plank or a rail to get work done?
- Is any scaffold sitting on ground that gets soft when it rains?

29 CFR 1926.451 · 29 CFR 1926.454

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ATTENDANCE RECORD

Scaffolds: Before You Climb On

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Date

Job / site

Delivered by

Company

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I delivered this talk and determined it was suitable for this crew and this work.

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