CrewSigned

Scaffold Safety Toolbox Talk

5-minute read-aloud · Last reviewed November 24, 2026

A lot of construction work happens on scaffolds, and most of us have been on one so many times that it feels routine. But scaffolds cause serious injuries and deaths every year. People fall off them, they collapse, and things fall off them onto people below. Today we are covering what keeps a scaffold safe.

It starts with the build. Scaffolds are put up, moved, changed and taken down under the supervision of a competent person, and only by people trained to do it. If you are not trained, do not add or remove parts. That includes pulling a brace or a plank to make room for your work.

The base matters. Scaffolds need solid footing, with base plates and mud sills on firm ground. Never set one on loose bricks, blocks, buckets or other unstable objects. Tall, narrow scaffolds need to be tied to the structure so they cannot tip.

Inspect before you use it. The competent person inspects scaffolds before each shift and after anything that could damage them, like high wind or being hit by equipment. Do your own quick check too. Look for missing planks or guardrails, damaged frames, missing pins and anything that looks bent, cracked or loose. If something is wrong, stay off and tell me.

Platforms should be fully planked, with no big gaps. Planks should be in good shape, not split or bowed, and should extend past their supports the right amount so they cannot tip.

On most scaffolds, once you are more than ten feet up you need fall protection, which usually means guardrails on all open sides. Some scaffolds require a harness too. Never stand on a guardrail, a bucket or a ladder on top of the platform to reach higher.

Get on and off the right way, using a built-in ladder, a stair tower or an attached ladder. Do not climb the cross braces.

Do not overload a scaffold. Know what it is rated for, and do not pile up materials. Keep platforms clean so you do not trip. Use toeboards, screens or barricades so tools and material cannot fall on people below.

Keep scaffolds well away from power lines, and stay off them during storms or high wind.

Discussion questions

1. Who is the competent person for our scaffolds, and when did they last inspect them?
2. How do we get on and off the scaffold safely on this job?
3. What would make you refuse to climb onto a scaffold?

OSHA standard

29 CFR 1926.451, Scaffolds, general requirements
https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1926/1926.451

SOURCES

Scaffolding, A Guide to Scaffold Use in the Construction Industry (OSHA 3150): https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3150.pdf
OSHA Safety and Health Topics, Scaffolding: https://www.osha.gov/scaffolding
Fall Protection in Construction (OSHA 3146): https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3146.pdf

This talk does not replace training that an OSHA standard requires. Scripts are based on OSHA and NIOSH publications and rewritten in plain language.

Safety Meeting Sign-In Sheet

TOPIC

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JOB / SITE

DATE

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PRESENTER

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