August 2025

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There is always some mold around. Molds have been on the Earth for millions of years. Mold can get in through open doors, windows, vents, and heating and air conditioning systems. Mold in the air outside can be brought indoors on clothing, shoes, bags, and even pets.

Mold will grow where there is moisture, such as around leaks in roofs, windows, or pipes, or where there has been a flood. Mold grows on paper, cardboard, ceiling tiles, and wood. Mold can also grow in dust, paints, wallpaper, insulation, drywall, carpet, fabric, and upholstery.

Avoid breathing in mold or mold spores. To limit your exposure to airborne mold, you may want to wear an N-95 respirator, which is available through the Safety and Compliance Manager.

Wear gloves. Long gloves that extend to the middle of the forearm are recommended. When working with water and a mild detergent, ordinary household rubber gloves may be used. If you are using a disinfectant, a biocide such as chlorine bleach, or a strong cleaning solution, you should select gloves made from natural rubber, neoprene, nitrile, polyurethane or PVC. Avoid touching mold or moldy items with your bare hands.

Wear goggles. Goggles that do not have ventilation holes are recommended. Avoid getting mold or mold spores in your eyes.

If you see or smell mold, you should remove it. Mold can be removed from hard surfaces with household products, soap and water, or a bleach solution of *no more than* **1 cup** of household laundry bleach **in 1 gallon of water**. A 10’ X 10’ area is considered an area that can be cleaned by individuals. If the mold exceeds this size, a professional cleaner may be considered.

08/11/2025 TBT - GFCI's

8-Toolbox Talk: Basic Electrical Safety – Important Things to Know About GFCI’s
[Reference 1910 Subpart S/1926 Subpart K]

This TBT contains information about an important safety device that helps prevent electrocution when we are using electrical tools or equipment; but it only works if it is properly installed and maintained. That device is a ***Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter***, also commonly referred to as a GFCI.

When a tool is plugged into an electrical receptacle, electricity flows from the receptacle to the tool through one of the electrical conductors in the power cord; this conductor is usually referred to as the hot wire. When the trigger or switch on the tool is activated, the current then flows through the tool to make it run and then returns to the receptacle via another conductor in the power cord; that one is referred to as the neutral wire. Ideally the same amount of current flows from the receptacle to the tool and then back to the receptacle - unless there is a short circuit, also called a ground fault.

Electrical receptacles and breakers equipped with a ground fault circuit interrupter monitor the amount of current flowing through this path, and if it senses a drop in returning current of just a few thousandths of an amp, it almost instantaneously trips an internal breaker and stops power flowing from the receptacle. You may find GFCI-protected receptacles or breaker switches installed on temporary power poles on construction sites, on many portable generators, and in areas of buildings or other structures where water may be present, such as in bathrooms, kitchens, mixing areas, garages, open sided shops, outdoor work areas, and on top of roofs. Also be aware that if one of the receptacles in a circuit containing multiple receptacles is GFCI protected, the GFCI will protect all the other receptacles wired behind it in the circuit, but not any that are wired in front of it in the circuit.

You can usually distinguish a GFCI receptacle by its two buttons, typically marked “TEST” and “RESET”, placed in the center of the receptacle. There are also GFCI breaker switches that can be installed inside of a breaker box which protects all receptacles in that circuit. There are also portable GFCI-equipped devices that can be plugged into an unprotected receptacle which protect equipment plugged into them. These breakers and portable devices also have the same two “TEST” and “RESET” buttons as a GFCI receptacle.

Because GFCI devices do occasionally malfunction or wear out over time, it is vitally important that we test them at the beginning of each shift. This is typically done by depressing the “TEST” button on the receptacle or GFCI breaker; you should hear a faint “click” sound as the device trips. You can further confirm the receptacle was de-energized by plugging in a tool such as a drill to the receptacle and try to operate it by depressing the trigger; it should not run if the GFCI tripped.

Once you confirm that a GFCI receptacle or breaker switch is functioning properly, firmly press the “Reset” button to re-energize the receptacle or circuit. And if any GFCI-protected device is not functioning properly, do not use it. Instead, mark it with a manner to identify it is not to be used, and then immediately notify your supervisor so it can be repaired or replaced by a qualified electrician.

08/18/2025 TBT - Portable Ladders Inspection

8/18/2025 Toolbox Talk: Portable Ladders – Performing Pre-use Inspections [Reference 1910 Subpart D / 1926 Subpart X]

OSHA safety standards require that we inspect our portable ladders before we first use them on any work shift. This is so we can identify visible defects that could cause a ladder to fail and the user to possibly be injured. An inspection must also be conducted after any event that occurs during the shift that may cause damage to a ladder; for example, if a portable ladder were accidentally knocked over, dropped, or struck by moving equipment.

So here are some common safety hazards and defects you should look for when you first set up your portable ladder. Keep in mind that some of these inspection points are only applicable to specific types of ladders (like extension, step, or mobile ladders) or to ladders made of specific materials (like wood or metal), while other inspection points apply to all portable ladders:

☐ Side rails that are split, bent, dented, splintered, cracked, or broken;

☐ Rungs, cleats, braces, or steps that have been bent, dented, cracked, splintered, or broken;

☐ Screws, rivets, or other fasteners that are loose or missing;

☐ Ladder components such as spreaders, hinges, and braces that are loose or damaged;

☐ Spreaders that do not lock into place when the ladder is set up;

☐ Ladder components that are rusted or corroded;

☐ Damage such as burns or blisters caused by excessive heat or flames;

☐ Non-skid safety feet or pads that are missing or damaged;

☐ Wheels, casters, or stoppers on mobile ladders that are malfunctioning or damaged

☐ Pull ropes and pulleys that are worn, frayed, malfunctioning, or broken;

☐ Steps, rungs, or side-rails which are oily, greasy, or otherwise slippery;

☐ Makeshift repairs or modifications.

When we do find structural or other defects on any portable ladder during our inspections, OSHA safety standards require that we immediately attach a tag stating “Dangerous: Do Not Use” or with similar language to the ladder. The damaged ladder must then be removed from service until it has been repaired by a qualified person to its original condition. Ladders that cannot be satisfactorily repaired by a qualified person must be destroyed and replaced.

Of course, most ladder damage can be avoided by making sure ladders are stored in a safe area and in a secure manner, so they do not fall over or get struck by moving equipment or materials. And we should also take extra care when transporting portable ladders to avoid causing damage.

8/25/2025 TBT - Aerial Work Platforms

Toolbox Talk – 8-25-2025 – Aerial Work Platforms

Manlifts and scissor lifts are two pieces of equipment that many workers can't imagine working without. This equipment, if used correctly, provides quick and safe access to work areas that at one time could only be reached from scaffolding or a crane's man basket. These lifts, collectively called Aerial Work Platforms, are important tools. But as with any tool, there are right and wrong ways to use them safely.

The most important tip to remember before operating any aerial lift platform is always read and follow the manufacturer's safety and operation manual! This information must be kept on the rig.

Safe Operating Procedures for Both Manlifts and Scissor Lifts:

- Only trained and authorized people should operate the lift. A qualified instructor must make sure that every operator reads and\or understands the equipment's safety and operating instructions. This includes all the warning decals and labels mounted on the machine.

- Always check for overhead obstructions before driving or elevating the platform.

- Refuel tanks only when the unit is turned off. If battery powered, the batteries should be charged only in a well-ventilated area, away from any open flame.

- Prior to each shift a safety inspection should be completed by the operator; this includes both a visual inspection and a function test. If a problem is found, get the lift repaired.

- Elevate the platform only when it is on a firm, level surface. Although many lifts look like a rough terrain piece of equipment, they are not. Their large tires do allow the equipment to access somewhat difficult areas, but once in position they are designed to be out of level only 5 degrees while in operation. This amounts to 10 inches in a 10 foot wheel span. In addition, the lift must have a tilt alarm that activates when the machine is more than 5 degrees out of level.

Scissor lifts are efficient one-direction lifts. They provide a solid surface to work from, but always remember:

- Guardrail, midrails and toe boards must be in place. The toe board can be omitted at the door.

• The platform must be equipped with a mechanical parking brake that will hold the unit securely on any slope it is capable of climbing. The brake should be tested periodically.

• Never use the lift's rails, planks across the rails, or a ladder, to gain additional height.

Unique hazards for manlifts: Manlifts can move in more than a single direction, increasing the risk of mishaps, so it's important to remember the following:

• Whenever working out of a manlift, a full body harness must be worn and properly attached to the basket. A sudden jolt has thrown people from manlifts, before they could react.

• Always maintain a safe distance from debris piles, drop-offs, floor openings, etc.

• Never drive the manlift when it is elevated above the limit the manufacturer considers safe. Each piece of equipment will state what the maximum extension can be while being driven.

Used correctly, aerial work platforms can be priceless, timesaving assets. Operate them without regard to their limitations, and this same equipment will put you and those around you at undue risk.