

Fall Prevention - Avoiding Falls While Working on Scaffolding

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Here are some tips to help avoid falls when working with various types of scaffolding:

Guardrails or another suitable form of fall protection, such as a personal fall arrest system or travel restraint system, must be used any time work is being performed on a scaffold platform that is 10 or more feet above the ground or lower level, according to Federal OSHA's scaffolding standards (address your state OSHA/company/jobsite rules here if the threshold requiring fall protection on scaffolding is different than the Federal OSHA 10-foot rule).

Guardrails, where used, must be installed along all outside edges and the ends of all scaffold platforms being used. Furthermore, if the scaffold platform is more than 14 inches from the face of the building or structure where work is being performed, then a guardrail or other suitable means of fall protection must be utilized along that side too. That rule changes to 18 inches for plastering and lathing operations.

Do not remove sections of guardrails on a scaffold to load and unload materials or equipment unless you are using an approved alternate form of fall protection. This might include utilization of a personal fall arrest system or a travel restraint system appropriate for the job.

Stepping directly onto, or off, a scaffold platform from any other surface, such as a building structure or another scaffold platform, is only allowed when the scaffold platform is not more than 14 inches horizontally and 24 inches vertically from the other surface.

Never climb the cross-bracing on a scaffold as a means of accessing a scaffold platform. Crossbracing is not designed for this purpose and doing so can lead to a potential fall for the person climbing on the bracing, or even failure of the entire scaffolding system.

Also, do not climb up or down a scaffold frame unless authorized by the Competent Person. Most scaffold frames are NOT designed for climbing on, even though it may appear they are. Only scaffold frames that meet strict design criteria and are designed and constructed for use as ladder rungs can be used for climbing.

When vertical lifelines are used for fall protection on suspended scaffolding, they must be fastened to a fixed safe point of anchorage, approved for use by the Competent Person, that is independent of the scaffold. The lines must also be protected from sharp edges and abrasion. Vertical lifelines, independent support lines, and suspension ropes must not be attached to each other, nor can they be attached to or use the same point of anchorage, nor can they be attached to the same point on the scaffold or personal fall arrest system.

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