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2025-05-05 Scaffold Competent Person

2025-05-05 Scaffold Competent Person

While most scaffolding is designed for ease of erection and use, there are still many hazards associated with scaffolding that can result in someone getting injured or even killed. Because of the various hazards associated with scaffolding, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, also called OSHA, requires employers to designate someone at every work site where scaffolding is used by their employees to perform critical functions to help ensure the safety of those employees who work on and around the scaffolding. And the person responsible for doing this is known as the “Competent Person”.

Here is an overview of a few of the major duties performed by the Competent Person at a job site where scaffolding is being utilized:□

The Competent Person is responsible for overseeing the erection of all scaffolding to ensure it is set up as designed per the scaffold manufacturer instructions. Conversely, the Competent Person must also oversee the disassembly of scaffolding, as well as the movement of any scaffolding, to ensure these activities are done safely;

The Competent Person must also inspect scaffolding as soon as it has been erected, as well as before first use on each shift, to identify any hazards that need to be corrected before employee use. And additional inspections by the Competent Person must be performed after any hazard increasing occurrence;

The Competent Person will also make sure that any powered scaffolding system is functioning and operated safely per the manufacturer’s instructions;

The Competent Person must ensure scaffolding is maintained as required per the manufacturer, and to oversee any modifications, alterations, or repairs to the scaffolding that may become necessary while it is in use;

The Competent Person must make sure scaffolding in use is capable of supporting the loads to which it is subjected, and to see that it does not become overloaded during use;

And last but certainly not least, **The Competent Person** must have the authority from his or her employer to remove or prevent workers from using any scaffolding found to be unsafe until the hazard has been corrected, repaired, or the scaffolding is removed from service.

However, the Competent Person cannot be present everywhere on the jobsite, nor can they see everything that is going on. That is why the next several toolbox talks will be dedicated to

educating us on some basic Federal OSHA regulations pertaining to scaffold design and use, so we can be better prepared to identify some of the most common hazards to watch for when we work with scaffolding. And when you do see a potential problem, be sure to take steps to ensure the safety of yourself and others and then inform the Competent Person or your supervisor of what you've seen.

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TBT 05/12/2025 Bloodborne Pathogens

Toolbox Talk: Biological Hazards – Be Aware of Bloodborne Pathogens

It is human nature to want to help someone in distress, especially if they are severely ill or bleeding. And while you may feel compelled to assist someone in trauma or just clean up blood or other body fluids after an accident or illness, you must be aware of the potential for contracting a harmful virus from another person's blood or other body fluids.

What we are talking about are viruses known as Bloodborne Pathogens. These pathogens include, but are not limited to, Hepatitis B or C, which can affect your liver, and the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, also known as HIV, which attacks the body's immune system and can lead to the development of AIDS. These viruses are harbored in the carrier's blood, and can be transmitted to another person who is exposed to their blood or other body fluids that could contain blood, such as Cerebro-spinal fluid (which surrounds the brain and spinal cord), synovial fluid (which is present in our joints), pleural fluid (which is found in and around the lungs), pericardial fluid (surrounds the heart), peritoneal fluid (which lines the abdomen walls), amniotic fluid (which surrounds a fetus in the womb), saliva in dental procedures, and any other body fluid that is potentially contaminated with blood, such as vomitus, semen, or vaginal secretions.

Everyone should recognize that exposure to bloodborne pathogens occurs when the blood or other body fluid of an infected person is absorbed into your body, which can occur through direct contact with non-intact skin or with mucous membranes. Unbroken skin is an excellent barrier to infectious agents. However, open wounds, such as cuts, scrapes, and broken cuticles, as well as pricking a finger on broken glass or another contaminated sharp object, provide a direct pathway for biological agents to be absorbed through the opening in the skin and into your body. The same is true when infectious fluids contact, and are absorbed through, mucous membranes lining the inside of the mouth, nose, eyelids, and vagina.

Also, be aware that anyone could be carrying a bloodborne virus, even if they do not show signs or symptoms of having a disease. You may recall that these people are "asymptomatic". So do not make a judgement call about a person being infectious based on their lack of symptoms; instead, treat all blood and body fluids as if they are known to contain a virus.

Remember; it only takes a single small exposure to an infected person's blood or other body fluids to contract an infectious virus. So, if you encounter blood or other potentially infectious body fluids while at work, do not touch it. Instead, report it immediately to your supervisor or safety staff so it can be cleaned up and the area disinfected by a designated person who is properly equipped and trained in procedures for dealing with potentially infectious blood and body fluids. The same applies if you should come across an item that could be tainted with blood, such as a used needle from a syringe or other sharp objects such as contaminated shards of glass.

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TBT 05/19/2025 Preventing Slips in the Workplace

Fall Prevention - Preventing Slips in the Workplace

Friction can be a bad thing, or it can be a good thing. Excessive friction generated when two surfaces rub against one another could create excessive heat, and that could lead to heat-related damage or even a fire. But when it comes to walking, friction is generally a good thing. Without friction, our feet would slip forwards, backwards, or even to the side as they contact the floor while walking, making it almost impossible to stay upright.

When we walk, the brains of most able-bodied people will automatically anticipate the amount of friction that will be present when the soles of their shoes contact various walking surfaces, based on previous experiences walking on similar surfaces. Then, our brains will subconsciously adjust the speed, distance, force, and angle of our gait to the type of surface present. For example, think of the differences in your steps when you walk on a carpet versus when you walk across a polished marble floor. So, when there is an unexpected change in the amount of friction between the soles of our shoes and the surface we are walking on, a slip can unexpectedly occur, and that could result in a twisted ankle, sprained knee, or even a harmful fall.

So, here are some simple things we can do at work, or home, to help prevent slips caused by unexpected friction changes:

- Take immediate action when you see any type of foreign material on the floor, especially liquids, food, dusts, or powders, as these could reduce friction when we step on them. Either clean up the material right away or take positive measures to warn others of their presence while you contact staff responsible for cleaning up such hazards.
- Always make it a point to wipe your feet on mats or rugs that have been placed near exterior doorways and other passageways to collect excessive moisture from the soles of shoes or boots as we walk from a wet environment to a dry environment.
- Adhere to workplace rules that require special types of soles on work shoes or boots when working in areas where there is reduced traction on the floor or walking surface.
- Report any loose rugs or mats that seem to move or slide as you walk across them, as their non-skid backing may have become worn or loose.
- Always take advantage of using handrails every time you go up or down stairways, as they can help you maintain balance and avoid falling if you should happen to slip

- Always make a conscience effort to pay special attention to where floor surfaces transition from one type of material to another, as changes in friction often occur at these areas.

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TBT 05/27/2025 Full Body Harness Do's and Don'ts

TBT - Full Body Harness Do's and Don'ts

Falls from one level to another are among the leading causes of severe injuries and deaths among workers in the United States. And to add insult to injury, no pun intended, many workers who were injured or killed were wearing a full body harness as part of a personal fall arrest system, but their full body harness was not properly worn or adjusted, and it failed to work. So today we will review some important tips to remember when you wear a full body harness:

- Only wear a body harness that a Competent Person has determined to be the right size for your body. Wearing a harness that is too big subjects you to injuries caused by straps that are improperly positioned, or you might even slip out of your harness and fall. Conversely, wearing a harness that is too small is very uncomfortable, tempting you to loosen or unhook buckles, which could lead to failure of the harness to arrest your fall.
- When adjusting your full body fall arrest harness, make certain that the D-ring on back, where your lanyard attaches, is centered evenly between your shoulder blades.
- Also make sure the chest strap in front is properly positioned across your chest and snug. If it is positioned too low or too loose, your body could be thrust forward when you hit the end of your lanyard during a fall, causing you to roll forward and out of your harness. Conversely, the chest strap could be yanked up into your throat if it is positioned too high on your chest. Also, adjust your shoulder straps to fit snugly so they don't slip off.
- Always make sure the leg straps are positioned properly, below your butt cheeks. Straps that are too loose, or positioned too high, could lead to you experiencing a nasty wedgie.
- Take the time to confirm that every buckle on your harness is properly adjusted and fully engaged, and that any loose ends of straps are tucked into retainers when provided. Leaving just one buckle loose or unbuckled could lead to failure of the harness to safely arrest your fall.
- When properly adjusted, you should only be able to fit two fingers of your flat hand between your body and the straps on your harness.
- Finally, every time you put on your full body harness, make certain that it is ALL the way on, connected, and properly adjusted, and leave it that way until you are ready to take it ALL the way off. That is because if you loosen or disconnect any part of your harness for even a short time, such as at a rest break or lunch, you might forget to make needed readjustments or reattachments when you are ready to resume work.

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