

# September 2024

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# 2024-09-03 TBT Scaffolding

## 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 some of 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.

Do you know who the Competent Person for scaffolding is at our worksites? [Identify your competent person(s) for scaffolding].

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# 2024-09-09 TBT National Construction Suicide Stand- down

Monday Sept 9<sup>th</sup> is a day for recognition to honor all those lives lost to suicide and show your commitment to getting every person home and back to the jobsite healthy every day.

## **HOW TO LISTEN**

Whether you know someone who is battling with thoughts of self-harm or not, active listening is a skill you can turn into a habit so those around you feel confident that what they tell you is heard and valued. Active listening is more than just hearing someone speak; it requires attention, concentration and listening with your senses.

## **BY THE NUMBERS**

In 2020, suicide was among the top nine leading causes of death for people ages 10 to 64.– According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the suicide rate is greater than the general population for those employed in the construction industry.– Psychology research highlights how positive social interactions increase our personal well-being and provide greater life satisfaction.

## **WHY IT MATTERS**

Active listening helps build trust and empathy between people. By seeking to understand and empathize rather than reply or solve, the other person can feel inspired to heal from their own mental health challenges. Active listening is an effective way to provide emotional support and validation.

## **GOOD TO KNOW**

Minimize distractions. Not only is it important to put down your phone when actively listening, it is also important to quiet your inner dialogue — an intangible distraction.– Reflect what you hear. Without interrupting to give advice or finish someone's sentences, paraphrase what they have told you. For example, saying "I'm hearing that

you're having a hard time with this situation," is a way to reflect on what you have heard and provide validation.- Focus on nonverbal communication. Nod and make eye contact to show that you care when someone opens up to you. Your body language should indicate that you are not passing judgment, and they can speak freely.

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# 2024-09-16 TBT GFCIs

## **Important Things to Know About GFCIs [Reference 1910 Subpart S / 1926 Subpart K]**

During annual and onboarding trainings it is discussed how tools and equipment which are grounded or double insulated help prevent electrocutions as we perform our work. Today we will discuss an important safety device that helps prevent electrocution when we are using electrical tools or equipment near water or in wet environments; but it only works as long as 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 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 (see handout for examples of these devices) 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 as designed.

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 danger tag or similar 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.

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# 2024-09-23 TBT Working Safely Around Mobile Cranes

Working around mobile cranes presents a multitude of potential hazards to your personal safety. Here is an overview of some common hazards associated with working around mobile cranes, and steps you can take to minimize those hazards to protect yourself and others:

- **Struck by the crane:** The swinging counterweight of a mobile crane can strike a worker or crush them between the counterweight and outriggers or a stationary object. So, maintain a safe distance from the counterweight on a crane, and never enter any area marked off by barricades or warning signs. Also, do not stand directly in front of or behind a crane when it is about to move, as the operator probably cannot see you there.
- **Struck by the load:** Workers can be struck by the crane's load during lifting operations. Stay aware of your positioning when loads are being moved, and never place yourself beneath a suspended load. Also, use a tag line when helping move a load that needs to be carefully controlled, as doing so will help you maintain a safer distance from the load as it moves.
- **Dropped objects:** Tools, equipment, or debris dropped while working on a crane can pose a hazard to workers below. So, do not stand beneath anyone working on the crane's boom or deck.
- **Overloading:** Operating the crane beyond its rated capacity can lead to structural failure, tipping, or loss of control. So never add any materials, tools, supplies, or other extra item to a rigged load unless you first get clearance from the qualified rigger for the lift.
- **Electrocution:** Contact with overhead power lines or other electrical sources can result in electrocution, especially if the crane's boom or load becomes energized. So always alert the operator ASAP if you happen to notice any part of the crane or the

load approaching overhead electrical lines. And NEVER approach or touch a crane that is in contact with an energized line.

- **Poor visibility:** Limited visibility from the operator's cabin can result in accidents, especially when lifting or moving loads in congested areas. So, if you notice the crane or load approaching something that appears to represent a hazard, say something right away to the designated signal person so they can stop the crane and take steps to avoid an accidental strike.

- **Wind and weather conditions:** Strong winds can cause instability in crane operations, leading to tipping or loss of control. If the wind suddenly starts to gust violently, adjust your positioning as needed to make sure you do not get struck by an out-of-control crane boom or load.

- **Unqualified operator error:** Inexperienced or unauthorized crane operators may make mistakes that can endanger themselves and others on the worksite. NEVER try to operate a crane at any time or for any reason if you are not a trained, designated operator.

If you have anything to add to today's discussion on safety hazards to look out for when working around mobile cranes, please reach out to me so I can share it with the group!

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# 2024-09-30 Fall Arrest

## Anchor Points

You've got your full body harness on and properly adjusted, and you've attached the proper end of your lanyard to the back D-ring on your harness. The next step is to attach the other end of your lanyard to an anchor point. But selecting the wrong anchor point could have some painful, or even deadly, ramifications. That means you must put some serious thought into what you hook off to with your lanyard. So, let's discuss some general principles about anchor points for fall arrest systems. First of all, be aware that when you free-fall and then hit the end of the lanyard, the shock load created can significantly exceed the total combined weight of your body plus any clothing and tools you may be holding, depending on the distance you free fall, perhaps up to 10 times your total combined weight.

So, only attach to an anchor point that a qualified person has determined will support two times the maximum shock load applied when someone of your total weight falls. And never tie off to objects such as, but not limited to, guardrails, scaffold posts, ladder rungs or side rails, window mullions, roof vent pipes, electrical conduit, ductwork, gas or sprinkler pipes, or ceiling tile grids, as these items are almost never suitable anchor points for a personal fall arrest system.

Secondly, when presented with two or more suitable anchor points, keep in mind that, all other things being equal, the higher the anchor point, the better. That is because OSHA fall protection standards require us to limit our free fall to no more than six feet, when feasible, and attaching to the higher anchor point will lessen the distance you will free fall. The benefits are you are less likely to make inadvertent contact with objects below you, and you will generate less of a jolt when you reach the end of the lanyard. Of course, you should also select the shortest lanyard possible when performing your job to reduce your fall distance. And in cases where attaching the lanyard to a high enough anchor point to limit your free fall to six feet or less is not feasible, get with the Competent person to look at alternatives, such as using a retractable lanyard or a travel restraint device. Another good thing to keep in mind is to select a suitable anchor point that is located as close to the center of your body as possible; ideally, directly over your head. Doing so lessens the propensity of your body swinging sideways, like Tarzan, and inadvertently striking a nearby object.

Also remember that many anchor points are designed for only one person to tie off to and would therefore not be suitable for two or more people to use simultaneously. So only use an anchor point that someone else is also attached to after confirming with the Competent person that it will support the potential load of everyone attached at the same time.

Lastly, remember that manufactured portable anchors, which are used on many jobs, must be attached to approved supporting structural members using the manufacturer's specified fasteners and installation instructions. Do not take shortcuts when installing these devices, or they could fail. These are just a few general principles to keep in mind about anchor points for our fall arrest systems.

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