Toolbox Talk Training: Scaffold Safety – Scaffolds: Avoiding Electrical Hazards

Contact with energized power lines is a serious scaffold hazard. It can happen while erecting, moving, or altering a scaffold, or while handling conductive materials on it. This talk summarizes OSHA's power line clearance rule for scaffolds (29 CFR 1926.451(f)(6)). Federal scaffold rules are in OSHA 29 CFR 1926 Subpart L (1926.450-.454) for construction; general industry scaffold work is covered by 29 CFR 1910.27 and 1910.28. Follow the manufacturer's instructions and your employer's rules.

Minimum clearances

Scaffolds may not be erected, used, dismantled, altered, or moved so that they, or any conductive material handled on them, might come closer to exposed and energized power lines than these distances:

- Insulated lines under 300 volts: 3 feet.
- Insulated lines from 300 volts to 50 kV: 10 feet.
- Insulated lines over 50 kV: 10 feet plus 0.4 inch for each 1 kV over 50 kV, or 2 times the length of the line insulator but never less than 10 feet.
- Uninsulated lines under 50 kV: 10 feet.
- Uninsulated lines over 50 kV: 10 feet plus 0.4 inch for each 1 kV over 50 kV, or 2 times the length of the line insulator but never less than 10 feet.

Working closer

Scaffolds and materials may be closer than these distances only where that is necessary for the work, and only after the utility company or electrical system operator has been notified of the need to work closer and has de-energized the lines, relocated the lines, or installed protective coverings to prevent accidental contact (exception to 1926.451(f)(6)).

What you can do

- Look for overhead lines before the scaffold is erected or moved. If you are not sure of the distance, stop and ask the competent person or your supervisor before going ahead.
- Be careful with long conductive materials such as pipe, conduit, and gutters handled on a scaffold, because they count under the rule.
- The competent person must supervise erecting, moving, dismantling, or altering a scaffold (1926.451(f)(7)).

Does anyone have questions about working near power lines on scaffolds? Thank you for participating. Please sign the sign-in form before leaving so your attendance is recorded. Signatures record attendance only, not certification or completion of required training.

General safety information only. This material does not replace required training, a site-specific hazard assessment, or professional safety advice. Before using it, verify current requirements with OSHA (osha.gov) and your employer. Follow applicable regulations, equipment manufacturers' instructions, and your employer's safety procedures.

Sources: OSHA 29 CFR 1926.451(f)(6) and its exception; 1926.451(f)(7). Discussion aid.

Free toolbox talk from Toolboxtalk.com. Do not sell, modify, or use on commercial websites for profit.

TOOLBOX TALK TRAINING SIGN-IN FORM

Topic discussed: Scaffold Safety - Scaffolds: Avoiding Electrical Hazards

Company Name:_____ Date:_____

Discussion led by:_____

PRINT NAME	SIGNATURE
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Signatures record attendance only, not certification or completion of required training.

General safety information only. This material does not replace required training, a site-specific hazard assessment, or professional safety advice. Before using it, verify current requirements with OSHA (osha.gov) and your employer. Follow applicable regulations, equipment manufacturers' instructions, and your employer's safety procedures.

Free toolbox talk from Toolboxtalk.com. Do not sell, modify, or use on commercial websites for profit.