Toolbox Talk Training: Scaffold Safety – Scaffolds: Fall Protection and Guardrails

Falls from scaffolds are a serious hazard. This talk summarizes OSHA's scaffold fall protection and guardrail rules in 29 CFR 1926.451(g). 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.

When fall protection is required

Each employee on a scaffold more than 10 feet above a lower level must be protected from falling (1926.451(g)(1)). The required protection depends on the scaffold type:

- Boatswains' chair, catenary, float, needle beam, and ladder jack scaffolds: a personal fall arrest system (1926.451(g)(1)(i)).
- Single-point and two-point adjustable suspension scaffolds: a personal fall arrest system and a guardrail system (1926.451(g)(1)(ii)).
- Self-contained adjustable scaffolds: a guardrail system with 200 pound toprail capacity when supported by the frame structure; both a guardrail system and a personal fall arrest system when supported by ropes (1926.451(g)(1)(iv)).
- Scaffolds not otherwise specified in 1926.451(g)(1)(i)-(vi): personal fall arrest systems or guardrail systems that meet 1926.451(g)(4) (1926.451(g)(1)(vii)). Crawling boards, walkways within a scaffold, and overhand bricklaying have their own rules in (g)(1)(iii), (v), and (vi).

Guardrail requirements

- Install guardrails along all open sides and ends of platforms, before the scaffold is released for use by anyone other than erection and dismantling crews (1926.451(g)(4)(i)).
- Toprail height on supported scaffolds placed in service after January 1, 2000 must be between 38 and 45 inches above the platform. Different heights apply to older scaffolds and to suspended scaffolds that need both a guardrail and a fall arrest system (1926.451(g)(4)(ii)).
- Midrails, when used, go approximately midway between the top edge of the guardrail and the platform (1926.451(g)(4)(iv)). Intermediate members such as balusters may not be more than 19 inches apart (1926.451(g)(4)(vi)).
- Toprails must withstand at least 100 pounds on single- and two-point suspension scaffolds, and at least 200 pounds on all other scaffolds (1926.451(g)(4)(vii)).

Lifelines

- A vertical lifeline must be fastened to a fixed safe anchorage, be independent of the scaffold, and be protected from sharp edges and abrasion. Standpipes, vents, other piping, electrical conduit, outrigger beams, and counterweights are not safe anchorages (1926.451(g)(3)(i)).
- Horizontal lifelines may not be attached only to suspension ropes (1926.451(g)(3)(ii)).

Do you have questions about the fall protection used on the scaffolds at our worksite? 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(g)(1), (g)(3)(i)-(ii), (g)(4)(i), (ii), (iv), (vi), (vii). Discussion aid.

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TOOLBOX TALK TRAINING SIGN-IN FORM

Topic discussed: Scaffold Safety - Scaffolds: Fall Protection and Guardrails

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Discussion led by:_____

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