Toolbox Talk Training: Scaffold Safety – Scaffolds: Keeping It All Together

A scaffold is held together by braces, pins, couplers, and ties. This talk summarizes OSHA requirements for scaffold connections and bracing, and how to report problems. 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.

Frame scaffolds

- Frames and panels must be braced by cross, horizontal, or diagonal braces, or a combination, that secure the vertical members together laterally. The braces must automatically square and align the vertical members so the scaffold is always plumb, level, and square. All brace connections must be secured (1926.452(c)(2)).
- Frames and panels must be joined together vertically by coupling or stacking pins or equivalent means (1926.452(c)(3)). Where uplift can occur, they must be locked together vertically by pins or equivalent means (1926.452(c)(4)).

Tube and coupler scaffolds

- Couplers must be structural metal, such as drop-forged steel, malleable iron, or structural grade aluminum. Gray cast iron is prohibited (1926.452(b)(9)).
- Runners must be interlocked on straight runs to form continuous lengths and coupled to each post, with bottom runners and bearers as close to the base as possible (1926.452(b)(8)).

Ties, guys, and braces

- Supported scaffolds with a height to base width ratio of more than 4:1 must be restrained from tipping by guying, tying, bracing, or equivalent means, installed as 1926.451(c)(1) describes.

Components and inspection

- Components from different manufacturers may not be intermixed unless they fit together without force and structural integrity is maintained (1926.451(b)(10)). Dissimilar metals may not be used together unless a competent person has determined galvanic action will not weaken them below required strength (1926.451(b)(11)).
- A competent person must inspect for visible defects before each work shift and after any occurrence that could affect structural integrity. Damaged or weakened parts must be repaired, replaced, braced, or removed from service (1926.451(f)(3)-(4)).
- Do not remove or change pins, braces, or ties on your own. For small parts such as pins and clips, follow the manufacturer's instructions. Report missing or damaged parts to the competent person or your supervisor.

Have you seen missing, loose, or damaged scaffold parts that should have been reported? 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(b)(10)-(11), (c)(1), (f)(3)-(4); 1926.452(b)(8)-(9), (c)(2)-(4). Discussion aid.

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TOOLBOX TALK TRAINING SIGN-IN FORM

Topic discussed: Scaffold Safety - Scaffolds: Keeping It All Together

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Discussion led by:_____

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