Toolbox Talk Training: Scaffold Safety – Scaffolds: Protecting Workers from Falling Objects

Tools, debris, and materials can fall from a scaffold and hit people on the scaffold or below. This talk summarizes OSHA's falling object protection rules for scaffolds (29 CFR 1926.451(h)). 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.

Protection for people on the scaffold

In addition to hard hats, each employee on a scaffold must be provided with protection from falling hand tools, debris, and other small objects. This is done with toeboards, screens, or guardrail systems, or with debris nets, catch platforms, or canopy structures that contain or deflect the falling objects (1926.451(h)(1)).

- When objects are too large, heavy, or massive to be contained or deflected by those measures, the employer must place them away from the edge they could fall from and secure them as necessary to prevent falling (1926.451(h)(1)).

Protection for people below

Where tools, materials, or equipment could fall and strike employees below, OSHA lists these options (1926.451(h)(2)):

- Barricade the area below that objects can fall into, and do not allow employees to enter the hazard area; or
- Erect a toeboard along the edge of platforms more than 10 feet above lower levels, for a distance sufficient to protect employees below; or
- Where materials are piled higher than the top edge of the toeboard, erect paneling or screening from the toeboard or platform to the top of the guardrail; or
- Install a guardrail system with openings small enough to prevent passage of potential falling objects; or
- Erect a canopy structure, debris net, or catch platform strong enough to withstand the impact forces of the potential falling objects over the employees below.

Canopies and toeboards

- Canopies must be installed between the falling object hazard and the employees. On suspension scaffolds, canopies require additional independent support lines, equal in number to the points supported and equivalent in strength to the suspension ropes, and these may not share anchorage points with the suspension ropes (1926.451(h)(3)).
- Toeboards must withstand a force of at least 50 pounds applied downward or horizontally, be at least 3 1/2 inches high, be fastened at the outermost edge with no more than 1/4 inch clearance above the surface, and be solid or have openings no larger than 1 inch (1926.451(h)(4)).

What you can do

- Do not remove or bypass falling object protection. If you are unsure it is adequate, stop and ask the competent person or your supervisor.

Does anyone have questions about protecting people from falling objects around 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(h)(1)-(4). Discussion aid.

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TOOLBOX TALK TRAINING SIGN-IN FORM

Topic discussed: Scaffold Safety - Scaffolds: Protecting Workers from Falling Objects

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Discussion led by:_____

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