Toolbox Talk Training: Scaffold Safety – Scaffolds: Safety Starts at Ground Level

What happens at ground level affects the whole scaffold. This talk summarizes OSHA requirements that apply to the base of a supported scaffold and to people working near it. 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.

Footing and foundation

- Supported scaffold poles, legs, posts, frames, and uprights must bear on base plates and mud sills or another adequate firm foundation (1926.451(c)(2)).
- Footings must be level, sound, rigid, and capable of supporting the loaded scaffold without settling or displacement. Unstable objects may not be used to support scaffolds or platform units, or as working platforms (1926.451(c)(2)(i)-(iii)).
- Poles, legs, posts, frames, and uprights must be plumb and braced to prevent swaying and displacement (1926.451(c)(3)).
- Front-end loaders and similar equipment may not support scaffold platforms unless the manufacturer specifically designed them for that use. Forklifts may not support platforms unless the entire platform is attached to the fork and the forklift is not moved horizontally while the platform is occupied (1926.451(c)(2)(iv)-(v)).

Changes and movement

- Scaffolds may be erected, moved, dismantled, or altered only under the supervision and direction of a competent person qualified in those tasks, and only by experienced, trained employees that person selects (1926.451(f)(7)). Do not move or change a scaffold on your own.
- A competent person must inspect the scaffold for visible defects before each work shift and after any occurrence that could affect its structural integrity (1926.451(f)(3)).

Staying clear of the area below

- Where tools, materials, or equipment could fall onto employees below, the area below must be barricaded and employees may not enter it, unless another listed option such as a toeboard, screening, guardrail, canopy, debris net, or catch platform is used (1926.451(h)(2)). Do not enter a barricaded area.
- Employees working where there is a possible danger of head injury from falling or flying objects must be protected by protective helmets (1926.100(a)). The scaffold standard assumes hard hats are worn by employees on a scaffold and requires additional protection beyond them (1926.451(h)(1)). Follow your employer's PPE rules for working near scaffolds.

What you can do

- If the ground near a scaffold base looks soft, washed out, disturbed, or if a base plate or mud sill has shifted, stay off and report it to the competent person or your supervisor right away.

Have you seen conditions at ground level near a scaffold that worried you? 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 1926.100(a); 1926.451(c)(2)-(3), (f)(3), (f)(7), (h)(1)-(2). Discussion aid.

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TOOLBOX TALK TRAINING SIGN-IN FORM

Topic discussed: Scaffold Safety - Scaffolds: Safety Starts at Ground Level

Company Name:_____ Date:_____

Discussion led by:_____

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