Toolbox Talk Training: Scaffold Safety – Suspended Scaffolds: Fall Protection and Lifelines

Suspended scaffolds hang from overhead supports and bring serious fall hazards. This talk summarizes OSHA fall protection rules for suspended scaffolds (29 CFR 1926.451(g)) and points to rope descent rules. 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.

Which fall protection applies

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

- Boatswains' chair, catenary, float, and needle beam scaffolds: a personal fall arrest system.
- Single-point or two-point adjustable suspension scaffold: both a personal fall arrest system and a guardrail system.
- Self-contained adjustable scaffold: a guardrail system when the platform is supported by the frame structure; both a guardrail system and a personal fall arrest system when it is supported by ropes.

Lifelines and anchorage

- A vertical lifeline must be fastened to a fixed safe point of anchorage, be independent of the scaffold, and be protected from sharp edges and abrasion. Safe anchorage includes structural members of buildings, but not standpipes, vents, other piping, electrical conduit, outrigger beams, or counterweights (1926.451(g)(3)(i)).
- Vertical lifelines, independent support lines, and suspension ropes must not be attached to each other or to the same point of anchorage (1926.451(g)(3)(iv)).
- Horizontal lifelines may not be attached only to the suspension ropes (1926.451(g)(3)(ii)).

Ropes

- A competent person must inspect ropes for defects before each work shift and after any occurrence that could affect a rope's integrity (1926.451(d)(10)).
- Suspension ropes must be shielded from heat-producing processes and protected from corrosive substances (1926.451(f)(11)).

Rope descent systems

Rope descent systems and their fall protection are covered separately, in 29 CFR 1910.27 and 1910.28(b)(12) for general industry. Ask your employer which rules apply to your job.

Do you know what type of suspended scaffold or rope system, if any, is used 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(d)(10), (f)(11), (g)(1), (g)(3)(i), (ii), (iv); 1910.27; 1910.28(b)(12). Discussion aid.

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TOOLBOX TALK TRAINING SIGN-IN FORM

Topic discussed: Scaffold Safety - Suspended Scaffolds: Fall Protection and Lifelines

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Discussion led by:_____

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