Toolbox Talk Training: Scaffold Safety – Scaffolds: The Role of the Competent Person

OSHA's scaffold standard gives specific duties to a competent person. This talk summarizes what OSHA says that person does (29 CFR 1926.450, 1926.451). 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.

Who is a competent person

OSHA defines a competent person as one who is capable of identifying existing and predictable hazards in the surroundings or working conditions which are unsanitary, hazardous, or dangerous to employees, and who has authorization to take prompt corrective measures to eliminate them (1926.450(b)).

Duties named in the standard

- Inspect scaffolds and scaffold components for visible defects before each work shift and after any occurrence that could affect structural integrity (1926.451(f)(3)).
- Supervise and direct erecting, moving, dismantling, or altering a scaffold. Only experienced, trained employees selected by the competent person may do that work (1926.451(f)(7)).
- Inspect suspension scaffold ropes for defects before each work shift and after any occurrence that could affect a rope's integrity (1926.451(d)(10)).
- Determine the feasibility and safety of fall protection for employees erecting or dismantling supported scaffolds (1926.451(g)(2)).
- Make other determinations the standard assigns, such as whether storm or high wind work is safe (1926.451(f)(12)) whether modified components from different manufacturers make a structurally sound scaffold (1926.451(b)(10)), and whether dissimilar metals are safe to use together (1926.451(b)(11)).

Related rules

- Scaffolds must be designed by a qualified person and constructed and loaded in accordance with that design (1926.451(a)(6)). Scaffolds may not be loaded beyond their maximum intended loads or rated capacities (1926.451(f)(1)).
- Damaged or weakened parts must be immediately repaired, replaced, braced, or removed from service (1926.451(f)(4)).

What you can do

- Know who the competent person is for the scaffold you use. Report damage, changes, or concerns to that person or your supervisor, and do not use a scaffold you believe is unsafe.

Do you know who the competent person for scaffolds is at this 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 1926.450(b); 1926.451(a)(6), (b)(10), (d)(10), (f)(1), (f)(3), (f)(4), (f)(7), (f)(12), (g)(2). Discussion aid.

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TOOLBOX TALK TRAINING SIGN-IN FORM

Topic discussed: Scaffold Safety - Scaffolds: The Role of the Competent Person

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Discussion led by:_____

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