Scaffolding Awareness

Presented by BHHC Loss Control

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Workers Compensation Division

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The Numbers: Scaffolds

Falls from scaffolds are consistently among the top causes of injuries and fatalities in the construction industry.

60 +

Nationwide, more than 60 workers are killed, and thousands are injured in scaffold-related incidents each year.

These tragedies can happen on both large commercial sites and small residential jobs.

The Numbers: OSHA

65%

OSHA estimates that 65% of construction workers (over two million people) work on scaffolds each year. That means scaffold safety is relevant to almost everyone who steps foot on a construction site.

The Numbers: Preventable

Most scaffold accidents result from basic, preventable issues:

- Unstable or poorly constructed scaffolds
- Missing guardrails or planking
- Poor footing
- Overloading
- Lack of proper fall protection

Shortcuts, complacency, and lack of training also play a major role

Good News

When safety is treated as a priority, most accidents never need to happen.

Most of these incidents can be prevented through planning, following scaffold procedures, conducting daily inspections, and effective training.

AGENDA

- How to assess scaffold structures and identify potential hazards
- The importance of communication and coordination during scaffold operations
- Legal regulations and industry standards for scaffold safety

We will focus on Best Practices….

…with a hint of compliance.

- The goal of an employee safety effort is to prevent injuries and increase the involvement of staff in your safety efforts.
- Regulatory standards are *minimum* requirements. Best in class employers go above and beyond.
- Remember that every workplace is different. Find the risk potential and address it proactively.

From: OSHA

Why is Scaffold Safety Important?

- Scaffold safety protects lives and prevents serious injuries
- Incidents cost more than medical bills they cause downtime, delays, increased insurance premiums, investigations, loss of reputation, and legal action.
- Employers and supervisors are legally and ethically responsible for ensuring safe scaffold operations. Failure to comply with OSHA or Cal/OSHA regulations can result in severe fines and even criminal liability.
- Safety isn’t just the law it’s good business. Safe jobsites earn trust with clients, reduce turnover, and keep projects on schedule.

Scaffold Erection/Dismantling

Only trained and authorized persons may erect or dismantle scaffolds under *competent person* supervision.

The Competent Person:

Identifies and corrects hazards before each shift and after any alterations	Determines if it safe to work on a scaffold	Determines the feasibility of fall protection	Trains workers	Selects the workers who will erect/dismantled the scaffold

Many trades are permitted to use scaffolds on jobsites. All workers must be trained to recognize the hazardous conditions on scaffolds and report them to supervisors.

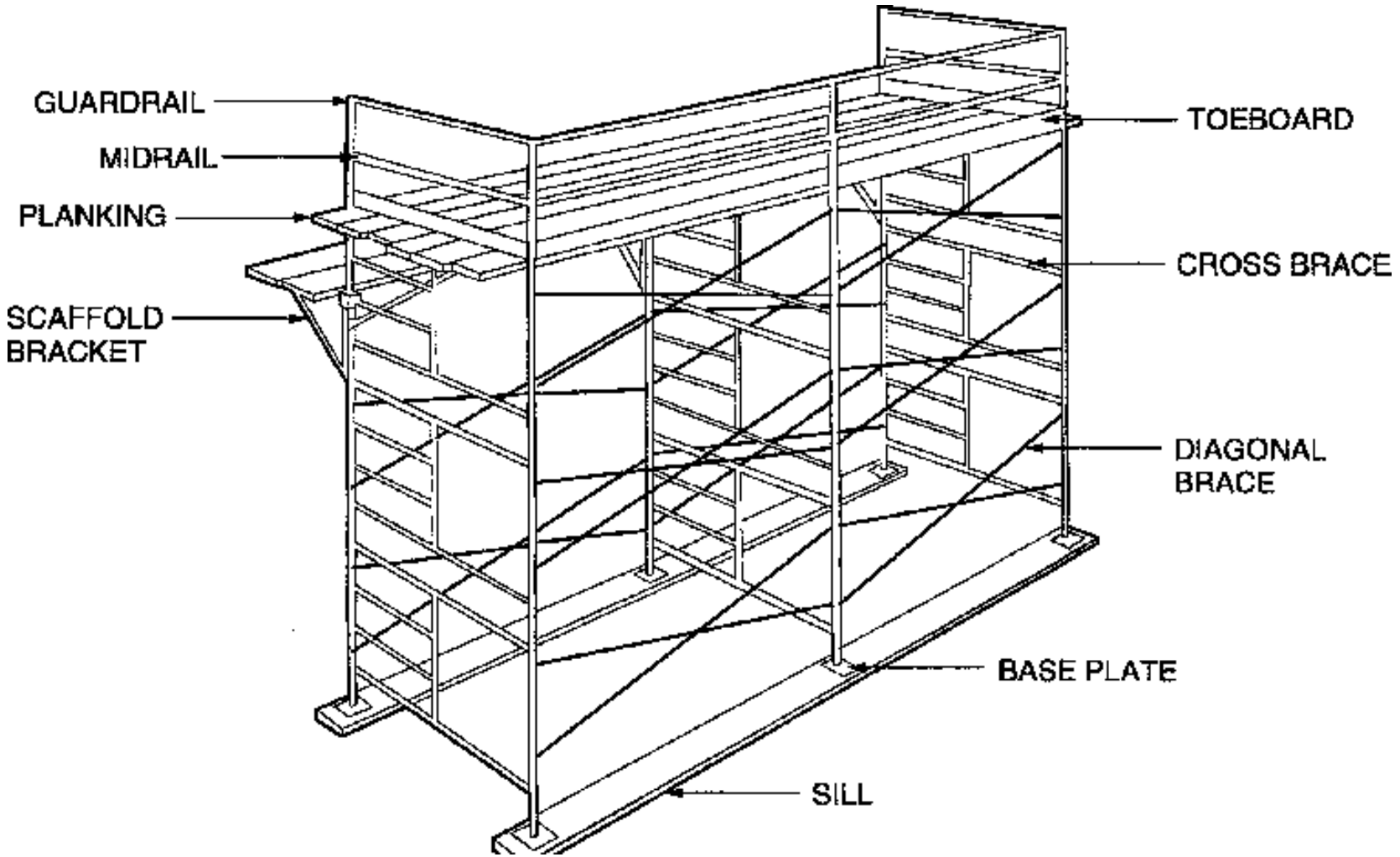
Inspections

Have scaffolds inspected by a *qualified person* before putting it in use.

Inspect daily and before each use. Check for:

- Planks
- Guardrails/toe-boards
- Access
- Tie-of
- Electrical clearance
- Overhead obstructions
- Level and plumb
- Bracing/Plates/Sills

Basic Scaffold Parts



Training

All workers who work on a scaffold must be trained.

The training must include:

- Fall hazards
- Falling object hazards
- Electrical hazards
- Proper use of the scaffold
- Handling of materials

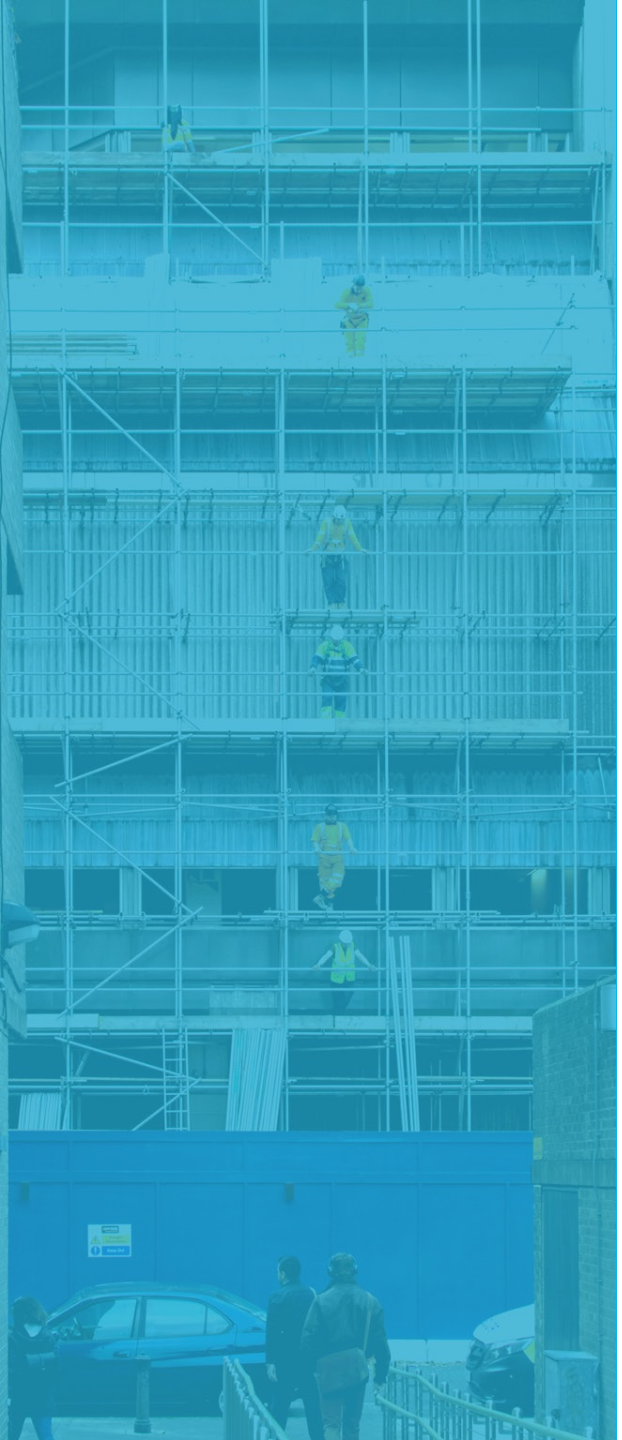
Retrain workers when there is a change in:

- Hazards
- Scaffold Types
- Fall Protection
- Falling Object Protection
- Employee Tasks

Falls

Falls may occur when:

- Climbing on or off
- Working on unguarded platforms
- Platforms / planks fail
- An unsecured scaffold becomes unstable
- Caused by slips and trips



When Falls May Occur:

- Climbing on or off
- Working on unguarded platforms
- Platforms / planks fail
- An unsecured scaffold becomes unstable
- Caused by slips and trips

Falls - Guardrails

Guardrails are designed to help prevent falls.

Personal fall arrest systems may be used with or without guardrails.

- Top rails: between 38 to 45 in
- Mid rails: halfway point
- Toe boards: 3.5 inches high over access points
- Installed on open sides and ends 7.5 ft or higher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Falls - Platforms

- Fully planked or decked: no more than 1 in gaps
- Support own weight + 4 times the maximum load
- At least 20 in wide (CalOSHA) /18 in wide (FedOSHA)
- Overlap at least 12 in over supports (unless restrained to prevent movement)
- End platforms at least 6 in over supports (unless restrained)
- Not be sloped more than 2 to 10

Foundations and Footings

All scaffold legs, posts, and frames must rest on stable base plates and mud sills.

NOT directly on dirt, asphalt, or other soft ground.

Sills and plates help distribute the load and keep scaffolds upright, even if the ground is uneven or weak.

Anchoring and tying the scaffold to a solid structure is essential to prevent tipping or swaying.

Foundations and Footings Continued

- Watch for and correct common defects:
  - Missing or misaligned base plates
  - Skewed, sloped, or unlevel legs/posts
  - Weak, cracked, or soft ground
  - Loose, missing, or improperly fastened building ties and bracing
  - Overloading or stacking equipment/materials on the scaffold
- Never use makeshift items (cinder blocks, bricks, scrap lumber) as scaffold footings

Leveling and Stability Solutions

1. Scaffolds must be perfectly level and plumb to ensure stability throughout use.
2. Use screw jacks and adjustable base plates to fine-tune scaffold height and level. Never shim with debris, bricks, or wood blocks.
3. Cross bracing and diagonal bracing are essential for rigidity and to resist sway/movement during work
4. Regularly check that all locking pins, clamps, and connectors are secure and in place.
5. After major weather events (heavy rain, wind, seismic activity), re-check level, plumb, and connections.

Unsafe Acts vs Unsafe Conditions

Unsafe Acts

Worker behaviors that increase the risk of an incident (e.g., bypassing fall protection, climbing on guardrails, removing braces “just for a minute,” horseplay, rushing).

Unsafe Conditions

Issues with the environment, equipment, or work setup that increase risk (e.g., missing guardrails, slippery planking, poor lighting, overcrowded platforms, damaged scaffolding).

- Both need to be addressed through training, strong supervision, and a “stop work” culture.
- Encourage all workers to report both unsafe acts and conditions immediately, with no fear of retaliation.

Falling Object Hazards

Workers can be seriously injured if struck by objects falling off scaffolds.

Scaffold workers exposed to overhead hazards shall be provided with overhead protection

Workers must wear hardhats when working below or around scaffolds

The access areas below the scaffold shall be protected by kick boards

Some scaffolds require barricades around them to prevent injury from falling debris

Proper Scaffold Use

- Follow manufacturer instructions and design limits
- Never overload platforms. Consider people, materials, and equipment
- Use designated access points
- Keep platforms clear
- Lock wheels/casters on rolling scaffolds unless moving the unite
- Report any hazards, damage, or misuse IMMEDIATELY

Load Capacity: Avoid Overloading

Every scaffold and platform has a specific load rating.

Know its design limits; never exceed rated capacity.

Load must be distributed evenly; concentrated weight can lead to local collapse.

Always post and communicated load ratings.

Unsafe Scenarios

How should you respond?

Some real-world challenges that may occur:

- No ladder or designated access point
- Scaffolding missing its green tag or has no inspection record available
- Whether has made planks icy or slippery, but the job is behind schedule
- A pieces of bracing, a pin, or guardrails is missing

Summary and Key Reminders

1. Every worker is responsible for scaffold safety.
2. Only trained and authorized personnel should build, modify or dismantle scaffolds.
3. Never use a scaffold that appears unsafe, hasn’t been inspected, or is missing required components.
4. Promptly report missing, damaged, or unsafe scaffold parts. Do not wait for someone else to notice.
5. Always be alert for changes: weather, nearby work, site conditions, and scaffold modifications can create new hazards overnight.
6. “Shortcuts” and improvising increase the risk for everyone.

AGENDA

Recap

- How to assess scaffold structures and identify potential hazards
- The importance of communication and coordination during scaffold operations
- Legal regulations and industry standards for scaffold safety

Please email additional questions to losscontrol@bhhc.com