

Spot The Safety Violation: Makeshift Scaffolds Won't Do



Do you think this makeshift scaffold complies with the safety requirements in the OHS laws?



When workers can't reach an area they need to work on, using a scaffold is one way to get safe access to that area. But scaffolds must meet certain requirements under the OHS laws. For example, they must be properly constructed from appropriate materials'they can't be thrown together with whatever materials or equipment workers happen to have on hand.

This picture from the US Naval Safety Center shows a worker on what appears to be a makeshift scaffold that doesn't comply with the safety requirements for such equipment. It's cobbled together with ladders, buckets and other items not intended for use as scaffolding.

And although it's unclear how high the worker is, it's worth noting he isn't wearing any fall protection. So if this jury-rigged platform should shift or collapse'which wouldn't be surprising'he's likely to fall and get hurt.

7 STEPS TO SCAFFOLD COMPLIANCE

To ensure that you comply with the scaffold requirements in your jurisdiction's OHS laws, take these seven steps:

Step #1: Determine if a scaffold is needed. For example, you may be required to use a scaffold or elevated work platform for work that can't be done from the ground.

Step #2: Select appropriate type of scaffold. If you determine that use of a scaffold is required, select the appropriate type of scaffold, such as a bracket scaffold, single-pole scaffold or rolling scaffold.

Step #3: Ensure scaffold is properly designed and constructed. After you've selected the appropriate type of scaffold, ensure that it's properly designed and constructed. In some cases, you may need to have the scaffold designed by a professional engineer. And when erecting the scaffold, you'll likely need to comply with requirements in the OHS regulations as to:

- Materials, such as the type of lumber permitted for use in wood scaffolds;
- Supports and beams;
- Brackets;
- Planks and platforms;
- Guarding, including use of guardrails and toe boards;
- Ladders; and
- Bracing.

Step #4: Ensure scaffold can carry expected load. To prevent a scaffold from collapsing, ensure it can carry the load or weight expected to be placed on it by workers, tools, materials and other equipment. In general, a scaffold should be designed to support and be capable of holding at least four times the load that's likely to be on it.

Step #5: Safely locate scaffolds. To ensure the stability of scaffolds, place them on flat, level ground and on a foundation that's capable of supporting their weight. And rolling scaffolds should be on a floor or surface that's free from pits, holes, depressions and obstructions. Also, avoid placing scaffolds, especially those made of metal, near overhead power lines.

Step #6: Inspect scaffolds. Have scaffolds inspected *before* workers use them by an engineer or someone considered a 'competent' person. (Use this inspection checklist.)

Step #7: Set safe work practices. Finally, set safe work practices for the workers who'll be working on scaffolds. One of the most important is to require workers to wear proper fall protection while on a scaffold and when required by your OHS regulations. And make sure to train workers on your safe work practices, such as with a safety talk on avoiding falls from scaffolds.

And here are 12 scaffolding dos and don'ts from Newfoundland's WHSCC and OHS Division's Scaffolding Safety Guide that workers should follow:

1. **DO** check that scaffolds are in safe condition prior to use.
2. **DO** ensure that planks, decks and guardrails are installed and secure.
3. **DO** use a hoist or rope to move materials to upper levels (but don't overload the scaffolding).
4. **DO** install cross-bracing at all levels and make sure locking devices and ties are secure.
5. **DO** make sure there's safe entrance to working levels.
6. **DO** check that the base is sound, level and adjusted.
7. **DON'T** carry materials when climbing scaffolding.
8. **DON'T** force braces to fit.
9. **DON'T** climb or stand on cross braces or guardrails.
10. **DON'T** work on scaffolding during storms or high winds. (See what can happen

to scaffolding as a result of strong winds.)

11. **DON'T** jump from planks or platforms.

12. **DON'T** rest materials or equipment on guardrails.