Safety Clips

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AMCA Supporting its Association Safety Plan

Arizona Masonry Contractors Association

Don't Fold on Scaffold Safety

Provided by BLR Safety Advisor

Scaffolds provide necessary access to certain jobs and require necessary training to work on them safely. OSHA general industry standard on scaffolds (29 CFR 1910.28-29) emphasize specifications that are very precise about everything from the spacing of the poles to the size of the planking. No matter what its type, a scaffold has to be strong enough for its load. It also must be designed so that:

1. The people on it won't fall off.
2. The people below it won't be hit by a falling scaffold, tools, materials, etc.

The first step to staying safe on scaffolds is to select the scaffold designed for the task and make sure it meets OSHA's specifications. While you or your employer may pick the scaffold that employees use, take time to review the key specifications with your employees. Scaffolds should be made of strong metal or stress-grade lumber. Here are some of OSHA's main requirements:

A scaffold must be able to support at least four times its maximum intended load of people and equipment.

-A suspension scaffold designed for a 500-pound load can hold no more than two people.
-A suspension scaffold designed for a 750-pound load can hold no more than three people.
-A suspended scaffold's rope or wire must be able to support six times the maximum intended load.
-While in use, a scaffold must be secured to the building or structure.

Give your employees these OSHA scaffold safety requirements that focus on preventing workers on the scaffolds from falling. Scaffolds must have:

-Sound, rigid footings able to hold the intended weight. You can't use boxes or barrels or other movable objects.
-Guardrails 2 x 4 inches wide and 3 to 3½ feet wide.
-Guardrail supports every 10 feet on all open sides.
-Toeboards 4 inches high on all open sides.
-Screens between the guardrails and toe boards on scaffolds over areas where people will be walking.
-Poles, legs, or other uprights that are plumb and secured.
-Planks that extend 6 to 18 inches over the end supports on wooden scaffolds.
-Cross braces on metal scaffolds.

Train employees how to inspect scaffold equipment before each use. OSHA's construction regulations require a "competent person" to perform these inspections. Nevertheless, still make sure employees inspect scaffolds to make sure that:

-The equipment can handle up to four times the anticipated load (up to six times the load for a suspension scaffold's rope or wire).
-The equipment is in good condition.
-Any damaged equipment is removed from service.
-Required personal protective equipment (PPE) in good condition is available for workers.

Tell workers which assigned safety equipment they must wear to prevent scaffold accidents. Employees who work:

-On or under a scaffold should wear a hard hat and sturdy shoes with nonskid soles.
-On a swinging scaffold should wear a safety belt that's attached to a secure line or structure, not to the scaffold itself.
-With tools should use safety nets to catch tools and debris so they don't have to carry them, and so they don't fall on the people below. A safety net designed to catch tools and materials is not, however, designed to catch a person. It's not a substitute for a secure scaffold and safe work procedures.

Finally, train employees to follow safe work procedures when working on scaffolds. For example:

-Don't overload a scaffold.
-Check that the scaffold and any personal fall protection system is firmly secured.
-Stay off scaffolds during storms or high winds.
-Don't work on a scaffold that is covered with snow, ice, or other slippery material. If you're assigned to clear that material from the platform, be sure you are properly equipped and extra careful.
-Shield scaffold ropes from corrosive substances or processes that produce heat.
-Don't stand on a box or barrel or other makeshift device while on a scaffold platform.
-Know when people are walking or working under the scaffold.
-Avoid letting debris accumulate on a scaffold platform.
-Keep tools and materials away from the scaffold platform edge.
-Keep only the materials you need on a scaffold.
-Remove all materials from the scaffold at the end of the day.

Why It Matters

In a recent study, scaffold accidents accounted for about 9 percent of the construction industry's annual fatalities. Scaffold accidents also accounted for about 2 percent of annual work-related injuries.

AMCA's Safety Committee is committed to providing support in your efforts to keep your employees safe and healthy. Safety Clips can be used in any number of ways: toolbox training sessions, company newsletter article or used as an opener for discussions in manager/supervisor's meetings, etc. Safety Clips is a means to keep safety topics fresh and in the forefront of your busy days and to make it easier for you to turn around and share with others in your company. If there are additional email addresses you'd like to add to the distribution list forward them to lori@azmasonry.net. For more information visit www.azmasonry.net.