



Systems Safety (Putting It All Together)

OSHA's Scaffolding Standard is complex, detailed and jobsite specific in its application. Each scaffolding system is unique, and is composed of countless parts. A "System" is as strong as its individual parts, and if one component is faulty, the entire "system" is suspect.

How Many individual parts make a scaffolding "system?" Maybe two or three hundred individual parts and pieces, maybe more, maybe less. But each piece is important, and must be given close attention by those erecting the scaffolding system. Here's a lengthy list of "do's and don't's."

MUD SILLS (at base of scaffolding system):

- Must be metal, or solid wood, and traverse the base of the system.
- No scrap brick, cinderblock, rocks, or debris.
- Look out for soft/wet/mushy ground conditions.
- Inspect base daily...after heavy rains...windstorms.
- Look for cave-ins, or fissures, adjacent to building structures (such as previously-excavated soils, back-fills, over-burden of system (loading).

HARDWARE (throughout system):

- Is all hardware connected?
- If one bolt is missing, the entire scaffolding system could collapse, causing major injuries, or even death.
- Is any portion of the system rusty, bent, deformed?

HORIZONTAL (is the system level, to both your eyes, and your instrument?. If so, system must be dismantled and started over).

- Check throughout shift, and particularly after rain storms.
- Is the system overloaded with brick, mortar, equipment, personnel, etc.?

ACCESS (how do you get on the scaffold?)

- Is there a factory-installed ladder?
- Is there an extension ladder erected?
- Don't use a step ladder to access scaffolding.
- Don't crawl out an upper-level window opening to access scaffolding.
- Don't use diagonal or horizontal members as your "ladder."

WORK SURFACE (PLANKING) (a sturdy work surface is probably the most overlooked part of a safe scaffolding system):

- Solid...solid...solid (no gaps)
- Uniform lengths (both ends/all levels)
- Inspect daily
- No debris
- Scaffold-grade planking (or equal)
- Adequate overlap

LOAD CAPACITY (how much will the system tolerate?)

- What are the “maximum intended loads”?
- What’s the “rated load capacity”?
- Do you know where to get this type of information?
(see OSHA Standard 1926.450 (Subpart L—Appendix A))

TRAINING (train...train...train):

- New-hires...jobsite “competent person”...erectors and dismantlers/other...each has need of a broad range of training regarding safe work practices.
- Daily (not weekly) Tool-Box Talks should be provided all workers on scaffolding systems. Conditions change from day to day.

Do you work on different types of scaffolds on your jobsites? Do you use rolling scaffolds? Swing scaffolds? Tubular scaffolds? Out-riggers? Each has its own set of peculiarities, and can “trap” you in a heartbeat