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TOOLBOX TALK

Scaffolding Safety

WHY THIS MATTERS

Scaffolding accidents kill approximately 60 workers and injure 4,500 every year. Falls from scaffolds, collapse, and struck-by falling objects are the top causes. About 72% of scaffold accidents are caused by planking failure, lack of guardrails, or overloading.

60
Scaffold-related deaths per year

4,500
Scaffold injuries per year

100%
Scaffold accidents are preventable

5 Essential Rules of Scaffold Safety

These rules apply to every scaffold, every worker, every time:

1. **COMPETENT PERSON MUST SUPERVISE**
   Only a competent person can design, erect, modify, or inspect scaffolds. Never alter a scaffold yourself.
2. **INSPECT BEFORE EVERY USE**
   Check all components before each shift. After storms, modifications, or any period of non-use.
3. **FULL GUARDRAILS ON ALL OPEN SIDES**
   Top rail (42"), mid rail (21"), and toe board on every open side. No gaps, no exceptions.
4. **FULL PLANKING WITH NO GAPS**
   Platforms must be fully planked. No gaps over 1 inch. Planks must extend 6-12 inches past supports.
5. **SAFE ACCESS AT ALL TIMES**
   Use built-in ladders, stair towers, or ramps. Never climb cross-braces to access platforms.

Before You Step On — Quick Checklist

- [ ] Has a competent person inspected the scaffold today?
- [ ] Are all guardrails, mid rails, and toe boards in place?
- [ ] Is the platform fully planked with no gaps over 1 inch?
- [ ] Is the scaffold on a stable, level base with mudsills?
- [ ] Is there safe ladder or stair access to each level?

Scaffold Inspection — What to Check Every Shift

Base/Foundation: Level ground, mudsills in place, base plates secure, no undermining from water or excavation.

Frames/Uprights: Plumb and level, all braces connected, no bent or damaged members, pins locked in place.

Planking: Full width, no cracked or split planks, secured against movement, proper overlap on supports.

Guardrails: Top rail, mid rail, and toe boards on all open sides. Properly attached and structurally sound.

Access: Ladders or stairs provided, properly secured. Cross-braces are NOT a substitute for access.

Ties/Anchors: Scaffold tied to structure at required intervals. Check all anchor points for stability.

Common Mistakes That Kill

- ✗ Climbing cross-braces instead of using a ladder — the #1 cause of scaffold falls
- ✗ Working on a scaffold without guardrails — "I'll be careful" doesn't prevent falls
- ✗ Overloading the platform with materials — exceeding capacity causes collapse
- ✗ Modifying the scaffold without a competent person — removing braces weakens the entire structure
- ✗ Using a scaffold near energized power lines — maintain minimum 10-foot clearance

Safety Tips to Remember

- ✓ Never work on a scaffold that hasn't been inspected by a competent person today
- ✓ Keep platforms clean — tools, debris, and materials on the platform are trip and fall hazards
- ✓ Never ride a rolling scaffold — lock all wheels before climbing on, unlock only to reposition
- ✓ Protect people below — use toe boards and debris nets to prevent objects from falling on workers
- ✓ Report any damage immediately — tag the scaffold out of service until repaired by a competent person

Discussion Questions for Your Team

1. Who is the competent person for scaffold inspection on this job?
2. When was the last time our scaffolds were inspected?
3. Are all scaffold platforms fully planked with proper guardrails?
4. Do we have proper access (ladders or stairs) on every scaffold?
5. What would you do if you noticed a missing guardrail on a scaffold?

TOOLBOX TALK SIGN-OFF

Date: _____ Supervisor: _____

Project: _____ Location: _____

Attendance sheet attached: [ ] Yes

