Toolbox talk

Scaffolding

Check it, use it right, never alter it

10 minutes | For: Anyone who works on or near scaffolding

Why it matters

Falls from height are one of the biggest killers in construction. A scaffold is only safe if it was built by competent scaffolders, inspected, and left as it was designed. One missing guardrail, board or tie can turn it into a trap.

Key points

1. Construction scaffolds must be inspected before first use, then at least every 7 days until removed.
2. They must also be inspected after high winds, an impact, or any substantial alteration.
3. Check the inspection record or scaffold tag before you go up. If it hasn't been inspected, don't use it.
4. Only competent scaffolders can put up, alter or take down a scaffold.
5. Never remove guardrails, toe boards, boards, braces or ties, even for a minute.
6. Don't overload platforms. Stack materials on the loading bays they were designed for.
7. Use the proper access ladders or stair towers. Never climb the frame.
8. Report damage or missing parts straight away, and keep off until it's fixed.

Sources: HSE: Construction FAQs, work at height and scaffolding; HSE: Inspection and reports (CIS47); Work at Height Regulations 2005 (legislation.gov.uk).

This talk supports, but does not replace, your site-specific risk assessment, method statement, training and supervision. Free to copy and use. **tradefoxapp.com/toolbox-talks/scaffolding**

Toolbox talk

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Do

- Check the tag and the last inspection date before using a scaffold.
- Keep platforms clear of rubbish, offcuts and trip hazards.
- Use brick guards and netting where materials could fall.
- Keep tools tethered or contained when working near edges.
- Tell your supervisor if you need a change made, and wait for the scaffolders.

Don't

- Don't use a scaffold that's tagged incomplete or unsafe.
- Don't move or remove ties to get a job done.
- Don't stand on guardrails, buckets or blocks to gain extra height.
- Don't throw anything off a scaffold. Use a chute or lower it.
- Don't use a scaffold in high winds or icy conditions without checking first.

Ask the group

- Where is the scaffold inspection record kept on this site?
- What would you do if a guardrail was in your way?
- Have you seen anything missing or damaged on our scaffold this week?
- Who is allowed to alter the scaffold on this job?

If it goes wrong: If someone falls, call 999 and get a first aider. Don't move them unless they're in danger. Keep everyone off the scaffold until it's been inspected, and tell your supervisor.

On this site

Nearest first aider _____

Emergency assembly point _____

Site-specific hazards and controls _____

_____

Sources: HSE: Construction FAQs, work at height and scaffolding; HSE: Inspection and reports (CIS47); Work at Height Regulations 2005 (legislation.gov.uk).

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Attendance register

Scaffolding

Site / project _____ Date and time _____

Presented by _____ Company _____

	Name (print)	Company	Signature
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			

By signing, attendees confirm they took part in this toolbox talk and understood the key points. Keep this record with your site safety file.

Presenter signature _____ Follow-up actions _____

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Go further: Scaffolding and lifting calculators

Sources: HSE: Construction FAQs, work at height and scaffolding; HSE: Inspection and reports (CIS47); Work at Height Regulations 2005 (legislation.gov.uk).

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Quick check

Scaffolding

Tick one answer for each question. Your presenter has the answers.

Name _____ Date _____

1. How often must a construction scaffold be inspected while in use?

- [ ] Every month
- [ ] At least every 7 days
- [ ] Only when first built

2. A tie is in your way. What do you do?

- [ ] Move it and put it back after
- [ ] Ask your supervisor to get the scaffolders
- [ ] Take it out for a few minutes only

3. The scaffold tag says incomplete. What does that mean?

- [ ] Use it carefully
- [ ] Don't use it
- [ ] Use it if the boss says so

4. When else must a scaffold be inspected?

- [ ] After high winds, an impact or a substantial alteration
- [ ] Only on Mondays
- [ ] Never, once it's up

5. How should you get up a scaffold?

- [ ] Climb the frame
- [ ] Use the access ladder or stair tower
- [ ] Use a stepladder on the platform

Sources: HSE: Construction FAQs, work at height and scaffolding; HSE: Inspection and reports (CIS47); Work at Height Regulations 2005 (legislation.gov.uk).

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For the presenter

Answers and sources

Quick check answers

1. At least every 7 days

HSE says inspect before first use, then every 7 days until it's removed, and after anything that could affect it.

2. Ask your supervisor to get the scaffolders

Only competent scaffolders can alter a scaffold. Removing a tie can make the whole structure unstable.

3. Don't use it

An incomplete or unsafe tag means the scaffold must not be used until it's been completed and inspected.

4. After high winds, an impact or a substantial alteration

HSE says inspect after anything that could affect its strength or stability, and after substantial alteration.

5. Use the access ladder or stair tower

Always use the access provided. Climbing the frame is a common cause of falls.

Sources

- HSE: Construction FAQs, work at height and scaffolding
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/faq-height.htm
- HSE: Inspection and reports (CIS47)
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/cis47.pdf
- Work at Height Regulations 2005 (legislation.gov.uk)
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2005/735/contents

> **Presenting tips:** keep it to about 10 minutes, use real examples from your site, ask the group questions rather than reading everything out, and record attendance on the register.

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No tag.
No access.

1. **Check the tag before you climb**
2. **Never remove ties, boards or guardrails**
3. **Report damage straight away**

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No tag.
No access.

1. **Check the tag before you climb**
2. **Never remove ties, boards or guardrails**
3. **Report damage straight away**

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Sources and qualifications

Scaffolding

Scope: Great Britain safety legislation unless a nation is identified. Northern Ireland has separate legislation. Site rules can be stricter than minimum legal duties; use the site assessment, instructions and competent supervision.

A4 applicability: no installation-design requirement is asserted in this talk. Its claims are referenced to the subject-specific sources below.

S1. HSE: Work at height/scaffolding FAQs

Competent erection/alteration, safe access, loading, inspection before use, 7-day interval and after events; talk sheet and quiz.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/faq-height.htm

S2. HSE CIS47: Inspections and reports

Inspection records and competent inspectors; Do/Don't and presenter notes. A scaffold tag supplements the legal inspection record.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/cis47.pdf