Toolbox talk

Mobile tower scaffolds

Built right, inspected, never moved with anyone on it

10 minutes | For: Anyone who puts up, moves or works from a mobile tower scaffold

Why it matters

Mobile towers are quick to put up and easy to move, which is exactly why they get misused. Towers that are built wrong, overloaded or moved with people on them can overturn or collapse.

Key points

1. Only people trained and competent to do so should put up, alter or take down a tower.
2. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions. No instruction manual means you can't build the tower.
3. Never build a tower higher than the manufacturer recommends, and fit stabilisers or outriggers when the manual says so.
4. Stand it on firm, level ground with castors locked. Never use bricks or blocks to support any part.
5. Guardrails, toe boards, bracing and the access ladder must all be in place before anyone works on it.
6. Use an assembly method that keeps you protected while building, such as advance guardrails or through-the-trap.
7. If you could fall 2 metres or more, it must be inspected after assembly and then every 7 days.
8. Never move a tower with people or materials on it, and never use one in strong winds.

Sources: HSE: Scaffolds and tower scaffolds; HSE: Construction FAQs, work at height; PASMA: Assembly.
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/tower-scaffolds**

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Do

- Check the inspection tag or record before you climb.
- Use the tower's own access ladder or stairway to get up.
- Lock the castors every time the tower is in position.
- Look up for power lines and obstructions before moving it.
- Lower it to no more than 4 metres before moving it, and push from the base only.

Don't

- Don't use a tower with missing guardrails, braces or toe boards.
- Don't put ladders, steps or trestles on the platform to gain height.
- Don't use a tower you think is unsafe. Stop and report it.
- Don't move or use a tower in windy conditions.
- Don't rest any part of the tower on bricks or blocks.

Ask the group

- Who on this job is trained to put up our towers?
- Where is the instruction manual for the tower we're using?
- What's overhead along the route we move the tower on?
- When was our tower last inspected, and where's the record?

If it goes wrong: If a tower tips or someone falls, call 999 and get a first aider. Don't move the casualty unless they're in danger. Keep everyone off the tower and tell your supervisor. The tower must be checked by a competent person before it's used again.

On this site

Nearest first aider _____

Emergency assembly point _____

Site-specific hazards and controls _____

_____

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Attendance register

Mobile tower scaffolds

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 _____

Quick check

Mobile tower scaffolds

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

Name _____ Date _____

1. Who should put up a mobile tower?

- [ ] Anyone who's used one before
- [ ] Only people trained and competent to do so
- [ ] The person who needs it

2. Can you build a tower without the instruction manual?

- [ ] Yes, if you've built one before
- [ ] No
- [ ] Yes, if it's under 4 metres

3. How often must a tower be inspected if you could fall 2 metres or more?

- [ ] After assembly, then every 7 days
- [ ] Once a month
- [ ] Only when first built

4. When can you move a tower?

- [ ] With one person on it, slowly
- [ ] Only with nobody and nothing on it, height reduced and ground checked
- [ ] Any time, if the brakes are off

5. Can you put a stepladder on the platform to reach higher?

- [ ] Yes, if someone holds it
- [ ] No, never
- [ ] Yes, for short jobs

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For the presenter

Answers and sources

Quick check answers

1. Only people trained and competent to do so

HSE says erection and dismantling must be done by people who are trained and competent to do so.

2. No

The manufacturer's instructions set the build sequence, bracing and maximum height. No manual, no build.

3. After assembly, then every 7 days

HSE says inspect following assembly and then every 7 days, and record the result.

4. Only with nobody and nothing on it, height reduced and ground checked

Never move a tower with people or materials on it. Reduce it to 4 metres or less and check the ground and overhead first.

5. No, never

HSE says never use a tower to support ladders or trestles. It can make the tower overturn.

Sources

- HSE: Scaffolds and tower scaffolds
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/safetytopics/scaffold.htm
- HSE: Construction FAQs, work at height
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/faq-height.htm
- PASMA: Assembly
  https://pasma.co.uk/assembly/

> **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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Nobody on it when it moves.

1. **Built by trained people only**
2. **Castors locked, guardrails on**
3. **Never put ladders on the platform**

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Sources and qualifications

Mobile tower scaffolds

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: Tower scaffolds

Competence, instructions, protected assembly methods, stabilisers, firm ground, locked castors, inspection and safe moving; all key points and quiz.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/safetytopics/scaffold.htm

S2. HSE: Work at height FAQs

Inspection/reporting thresholds and 7-day rule; pre-use and event checks still apply below 2 m.

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

Presenter qualification: A tower must be checked after assembly and events affecting safety. The two-metre threshold concerns the construction inspection/report requirement, not an exemption from safe use below that height.