

Scaffold Safety

Ignoring the Guidelines Can Be a “Capitol” Mistake

We at the Scaffold Industry Association, Van Nuys, Calif., often write about the fact that some very unsafe scaffolds are found in most cities throughout the United States. They are usually due to alteration of the scaffolds or as a result of unskilled workers who erected the scaffolds.

In the shadow of the U.S. Capitol, where safety laws are enacted, we observe the same kinds of safety violations found anywhere else in the country.

The low incidence of accidents incurred by skilled scaffold erectors is amazing, considering the nature of their work and the fact that most of them have many years of experience. However, from time to time, even an experienced scaffolder may be observed taking unnecessary chances.

Look Ma! No Brains!

We are hard pressed to understand what the worker was doing in the photograph shown on the cover of this month's *Construction Dimensions*. Of course we can see that he was holding a scaffold frame high above his head, preparing to insert

the legs into the frame below. The photograph does not show whether the level below him was planked, but it appears that he has stepped up to the rungs of the “walk through”

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frame (that portion often referred to as the “hockey stick”) in order to make it easier to insert the frame.

Considering the weight of a 5-foot wide scaffold frame, we realize the great strength and balance required of scaffold erectors. However, we believe there is an easier and safer way to install scaffold frames.

Since so many thousands of workers are involved in the erection of scaffolds each day throughout industry, and considering the fact that every construction worker, as well as most general industry workers, must either erect, or at least work on scaffolds, the importance of training is evident.

OSHA Speaks

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration recognized that fact when it developed the proposed revised standard for scaffolding as published in the Federal Register, Nov. 25, 1986. A new section CFR 1926.460, which would place additional responsibilities on employers to train employees, was proposed.

In addition to the current requirements of CFR 1926.21, Safety Training

and Education, new provisions were proposed as follows:

“All employees using scaffolds to perform a job tasks shall be instructed in the proper construction, use, placement and care of the scaffolds they are using, and the applicable provisions of this subpart”

“All employees repairing scaffolds shall be competent individuals trained and familiar with the design criteria, intended use and proper procedures for repairing the defective components(s).”

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“suspended scaffolds shall be operated only by persons who have been instructed in the operation, use and inspection of the particular suspended scaffold being used. Employers shall instruct and supervise their employees in the safe use of all equipment provided.”

“Training and retraining shall be provided for each employee as necessary.”

Safety Training

Several years ago the Scaffold Industry Association developed its training

program for suspended scaffolding. This course has gone a long way toward preparing workers to meet the safety requirements proposed by OSHA. It also gives the employer better assurance that the workers who have completed the course will be better qualified to use the equipment safely.

Now it's time to zero in on the specific area of scaffold erections. Even though the SIA members have an excellent safety record, it must be remembered thousands of other workers are also erecting scaffolds everyday. The SIA will formalize and implement a comprehensive training program to address the needs for levels of training necessary to certify workers employed as scaffolders.

The training will encompass all aspects of knowledge necessary for the different levels of training required. The scope of the program will allow movement of workers

throughout various industries to perform their work in a safe and productive manner. □

The Scaffold Industry Association requests the support of interested parties to form a matrix from the following areas: manufacturers, suppliers, users, service companies, government, labor, training and safety agencies and other interested groups. If you have any written information or other material to assist us in this, please contact the SIA office at 14039 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, Calif., 91405-2599; telephone (818) 7822012; Fax (818) 786-3027.

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