

OSHA Training Toolbox Talk: Basic Scaffold Safety - Safety While Working on Suspended Scaffolds

[Reference 1910 Subpart D / 1926 Subpart L]

Working from suspended scaffolding and rope descent systems present many potential safety hazards, with falling being one of the most prevalent concerns, for obvious reasons. Unfortunately, too many employers and workers either do not understand what precautions are necessary to prevent falls when working on a suspended scaffold or using a rope descent system, or they get complacent and take shortcuts to save time and effort, and end up paying a high price for their decision.

So today we are going to review a few important safety tips that can help us avoid injuries and fatalities associated with falling while working with this equipment.

- Under no circumstances are you allowed to work from a suspended scaffold or similar equipment, such as a boson's chair connected to a rope descent system, without also being protected by wearing a full body harness attached to an independent safety line.
- By independent, we mean that the anchor or attachment point on the building or structure where the safety line for your personal fall arrest system attaches must NOT, under any circumstances, also be used to attach the suspension lines for the suspended scaffold or rope descent system you are utilizing; it MUST be a separate anchor point.
- Do not attach your independent safety line to just any item that may be conveniently available on top of the roof or structure, such as roof vents, conduits, access ladders, or air conditioner units; instead, make sure the Competent Person confirms that whatever you plan to tie off to has been approved for use as an anchor point.
- Only use fall arrest equipment specifically designed and issued for personal fall arrest systems; ropes, harnesses, and other equipment that are not designed for such use may break or otherwise fail, resulting in you falling in spite of the fact you were tied off.
- Make certain that ropes used for fall arrest systems and for equipment suspensions are protected from cuts and abrasions at points where they contact sharp edges of the building or structural components. And immediately report any damaged ropes or other fall protection components that you see to the Competent Person.
- Although you may be tied off to an independent safety line does not mean that you are relieved from maintaining safety rails on suspended work platforms. So do not remove top or mid-rails installed along the sides and ends of any suspended work platform.

These are just a few important safety tips that can help us avoid accidents, injuries, and fatalities when working on suspended scaffolds and similar equipment. Who can think of any others that that we should make sure to discuss today?

Thank you for your participation. Please make certain you sign your name on the training certification form so you get credit for attending today's toolbox training session on this topic.