Scaffolding & Access: Safe Erection, Use and Dismantling Stats and Facts



FACTS

- **Foundation Failure:** Unlevel, soft, or improperly supported foundations can cause an entire scaffold to shift, tilt, or collapse under load, even if every other component is correctly assembled.
- **Missing Fall Protection:** Workers on scaffolds above the required height threshold without guardrails or harnesses are exposed to a fall hazard that can be fatal in seconds.
- **Improper Access:** Climbing cross braces or using unauthorized methods to get on and off a scaffold significantly increases fall risk. Only proper ladders, stair towers, or designated access points should be used.
- **Incomplete Planking:** Gaps in scaffold decking create fall-through hazards and unstable footing, putting every worker on the structure at risk with each step.
- **Overloading the Structure:** Stacking excess materials, tools, or workers beyond a scaffold’s rated capacity can cause structural failure or sudden collapse.
- **Erection and Dismantling Risk:** The moments a scaffold is being built or taken apart are among the most dangerous in its lifecycle, as fall protection may not yet be installed and workers are most exposed.
- **Weather Exposure:** Wind, rain, ice, and snow change scaffold stability and footing without warning, turning a safe structure hazardous within minutes.

STATS

- In 2022, nearly 1 in 5 workplace deaths in the U.S. occurred in construction, and 38.4 percent of those deaths were due to falls, slips, and trips.
- In 2024, there were 389 fatal falls to a lower level out of 1,034 total construction fatalities in the U.S., according to BLS data.
- Scaffold-related violations consistently rank among OSHA’s top 10 most frequently cited standards, with 2,859 scaffolding violations recorded in fiscal year 2023.
- The most frequently cited scaffolding violation — failure to protect employees on scaffolds more than 10 feet above a lower level — accounted

for 813 of those violations.

- The second most cited scaffolding violation, requiring proper access methods rather than cross braces, accounted for 372 violations.
- Falls from ladders, scaffolds, and roofs account for nearly 40 percent of all construction fatalities in the United States.
- The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported 52 fatal falls to lower levels from scaffolding in the United States in 2020.