



Lack of Fall Protection Measures Place Workers at Increased Risk

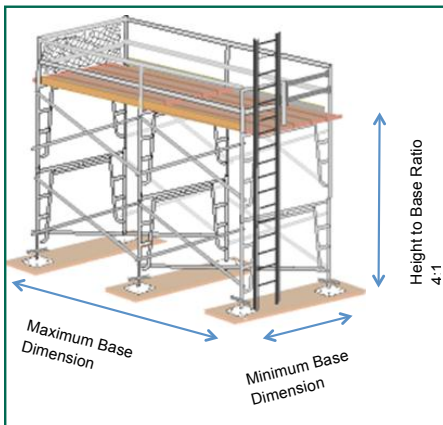


A construction company president received this picture in an email from his customer inquiring about the look of a wall on a new office building.

When the company president saw the picture, he forwarded it to the company Safety Director.

What Happened?

The employee on the left of the picture is standing on scaffolding erecting a concrete pillar form. The scaffold is almost 20 feet tall, exceeds the 4:1 height to base ratio, and is not restrained. In addition, there are no midrails or ladder access for this worker. This scaffold was not erected or inspected by a competent person.



An employee (center of picture) is standing on the 3rd floor of a building with no guard rails in place or other fall protection. Note that his toes are over the edge and he is leaning outside the building.

On the right side of the picture is a forklift picking up two people (only one visible in this picture) on a pallet. The forklift is sitting on a berm embankment to gain access to the higher parts of the structure. The operator is the site superintendent. The one visible person on the pallet is not an employee, but the superintendent's 16-year-old son. They were cleaning the wall of excess material.

Who Could Have Gotten Injured?

The worker on the scaffolding could have fallen from the scaffold, which had no safe access and inadequate guard railing. In addition, the scaffold itself exceeded the allowable 4:1 height to base ratio without restraint and ran the risk of tipping over.

The worker leaning out the 3rd floor window could have fallen over 20 feet to a hard-packed dirt surface. This worker had previously broken his arm, sued the company because of his injury, and won a judgment against the company.

The two people on the pallet could have fallen or been thrown from the forklift when it was moving or extending to position the people closer to the wall.

1926.451(c)(1)

Supported scaffolds with a height to base width (including outrigger supports, if used) ratio of more than four to one (4:1) shall be restrained from tipping by guying, tying, bracing, or equivalent means ... Guys, ties, and braces shall be installed according to the scaffold manufacturer's recommendations.



What Can Be Done to Avoid Similar Situations?

According to OSHA standards, no scaffold shall be erected, moved, altered or dismantled unless under the supervision and direction of a competent person. A scaffold must also be inspected by a competent person before each work shift for defects or more often if you suspect any damage from wind, overloading or equipment contact. Employees shall have safe access at all working levels.

Any construction worker who is exposed to a fall greater than six feet must have some kind of fall protection; a guard rail system, safety net system, or a personal fall arrest system.

The workers on the pallet were exposed to a fall, and you should NEVER lift someone up on the forks of a lift truck unless they are in a properly designed personnel basket on a lift that is rated for that purpose. Workers should consult the lift truck's operator manual and other factory documentation to determine if the lift truck is rated for hoisting personnel. If this information is not provided, a representative of the manufacturer should be consulted.

Using under age workers for construction work is a dangerous practice. The U.S. Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division does not allow young workers to operate most equipment or to be employed in occupations that have been declared hazardous by the Secretary of Labor.

Management:

Managers are responsible for their workers' safety. In this case, the superintendent had not received any safety specific supervisory training or OSHA 10/30 hour training.

Supervisors need additional safety training not only in how to identify hazards, but in the proper abatement of those hazards as well. In addition, supervisors need training in how to manage workers when unsafe behaviors happen.

Companies need to establish a policy on under age construction workers and train managers on the limitations of these young workers. Federal law establishes certain safety standards and restrictions for young workers. In addition, many states have their own laws regarding workers under the age of 18 which must be followed by employers.

Workers:

Workers need training in hazard recognition, use of PPE, forklifts, scaffolds and proper controls for falls from heights.

Additional Information:

- NIOSH Campaign to Prevent Falls in Construction Web Page: cdc.gov/niosh/construction/stopfalls.html
- OSHA Preventing Falls in Construction Web Page: osha.gov/stopfalls
- OSHA Young Workers Rights Web Page: osha.gov/youngworkers/index.html
- DOL Young Worker Rules Web Page: youthrules.dol.gov/know-the-limits/index.htm

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