



## Scaffolding

This document provides employers and employees with information about WorkSafe's current construction safety focus on scaffolding.

WorkSafe inspectors are currently visiting sites across Victoria to ensure employers (and self-employed persons) are managing the hazards and risks associated with use of scaffolds.

Scaffolds will typically be used at some point during most construction projects; such as bracket, modular, mobile or suspended type scaffold or a combination of scaffolds. Whatever type of scaffold is used, it is important to understand how to identify hazards and control risks associated with their use.

### Background

Incidents commonly associated with scaffolds include:

- persons falling from incomplete scaffolds or scaffolds that have been altered without authorisation
- scaffold collapse/componentry failure due to incorrect assembly, incompatible componentry, overloading or unauthorised alteration (eg tie removal)
- persons falling from scaffolding due to misuse (eg standing on guardrails)
- objects falling off scaffolds and hitting persons below
- scaffolds being struck by mobile plant/vehicle or being snagged by a crane.

**Note:** The above safety issues are not intended to be a comprehensive list and are provided for illustrative purposes only.

### Duty holder obligations

Employers have a general duty to provide and maintain a working environment for employees (including contractors) that is safe and without risks to health, so far as is reasonably practicable.

As an employer, you must provide and maintain safe systems of work and plant (eg scaffolding), so far as is reasonably practicable.

An employer (including a self-employed person) must also ensure that a safe work method statement (SWMS) is developed before starting any high risk construction work (HRCW) that poses a risk to the health or safety of any person arising from the work, and that work is undertaken in accordance with the SWMS.

Construction work involving erection of scaffolding, working from scaffolding or dismantling scaffolding will usually involve a number of prescribed HRCW activities (eg where there is a risk of a person falling more than two metres, or working near energised electrical installations or services).

### Inspector focus

As part of the focus on scaffolding, WorkSafe inspectors are looking to ensure that a safe work environment is provided and maintained; and processes are in place to ensure scaffolding is and remains safe. This includes, but is not limited to the points set out below:

#### During scaffold erection

- Scaffolding is erected /dismantled 'sequentially' to control risk of falls to scaffolders.
- Scaffold components are compatible with each other.
- Persons (other than scaffolders) are prevented from accessing incomplete scaffolds eg warning signs and barriers.
- Exclusion zones are maintained during scaffold erection activities.
- Compliance with No Go Zone (NGZ) requirements where scaffolding is erected, dismantled or in use near overhead power lines. Including compliance with 'Permit to Work' requirements issued by the power distribution company. For example: hoarding boards / shade mesh to be secured to the scaffold as a barrier.
- Engineering approval is obtained where shade-mesh or hoarding is affixed to scaffolding.
- For complex scaffolds, design drawings are supplied by the scaffold supplier and scaffolding is erected in accordance with it.

#### Scaffolding safety

- Scaffolding provided is, and remains, safe, fit for purpose, stable and complete. This includes ensuring:
  - there is an appropriate footprint for scaffold to be erected
  - it is constructed on a stable surface or solid ground that is capable of bearing the imposed loads
  - where required, appropriate ties or other means of stabilisation are used.
- Safe and clear access and egress is provided to all working platforms eg clear access to ladder / stairs.
- Scaffolding is protected from impact by mobile plant, vehicle traffic and isolated from unauthorised users and the public.
- Where appropriate, toe boards/ kick boards and mesh is in place to prevent objects from falling.
- Damaged planks and components are removed or replaced by the scaffold supplier or licensed scaffolder.
- Scaffolding is only used for the purpose for which it was designed.

**Note:** Scaffolding used for demolition work should be no less than heavy duty class.

# Construction Safety Focus

## Safe Systems

- Principal contractors or other persons in management or control of the scaffold have a system in place to prevent unauthorised modifications / alterations to the scaffold (eg communicated at site inductions).
- Scaffolding is regularly inspected; this means before first use, prior to use following alterations or repairs, prior to use following adverse weather (eg high winds/storms) that could affect scaffold integrity or stability, and at regular intervals not exceeding 30 days.
- Scaffold inspection tags should be placed by the scaffolder at each access point.
- Handover certificate is provided when erection is complete and following any alterations. The certificate should be kept on site until the scaffold has been dismantled. Handover certificate should contain important information, such as:
  - Name and address of the person requiring scaffold
  - Name and address of the organisation erecting/altering the scaffold
  - Address and locations of the scaffold
  - Scaffold type, size, duty loading and rating,
  - Intended purpose of the scaffold
  - Maximum number of working platforms that can be loaded and worked from at any one time
  - Date and time of handover
  - Confirmation the scaffold complies with any design specifications and/or relevant Australian Standard it has been erected in accordance with.

## Training and licensing

Employees have been provided with any necessary information, instruction or training for safe erection, use and dismantling of the scaffold.

An appropriate scaffolding license is required for scaffolding work, if the scaffold is such that a person or object could fall more than 4 metres from the scaffold.

The type of scaffold to be erected and dismantled will determine the class of scaffolding licence required: ie basic scaffolding (SB), intermediate scaffolding (SI), advanced scaffolding (SA).

## Consultation

An employer must consult affected employees including health and safety representatives (HSRs) when making decisions about risk control measures, including, for example, identifying or assessing hazards and risks, and when determining or reviewing risk controls, so far as is reasonably practicable.

## Employee duties

Employees must take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work. This includes not interfering with or misusing things provided at a workplace in the interests of health, safety or welfare (eg not making unauthorised alterations to scaffolding).

## Further Information

Visit [www.worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au) to download the following publications:

*Guidance Note Fall Prevention for Scaffolders*  
*Fall prevention in erecting & dismantling birdcage scaffolds*  
*On-site inspection of scaffolding components is critical to safety communique*  
*What you need to know about Suspended scaffolds*  
*FAQ Tower frame scaffolds*  
*Bracket Scaffolds in Housing Construction*  
*Information About, Safe Work Method Statements*  
*Construction Safety Focus, Preventing falls from height in building & construction*  
*Construction Safety Focus, Falling object prevention*  
*Working safely in the general construction industry, Handbook*  
*Working safely in housing construction industry, Handbook*  
*Licence classes – Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017*

Energy Safe Victoria visit [www.esv.vic.gov.au](http://www.esv.vic.gov.au)

*No Go Zone – Scaffolding*  
*No Go Zone – Working around power lines*  
*Guide lines for scaffolding near service lines*  
*Guide lines for scaffolding near overhead power lines*

Standards Australia visit [www.saiglobal.com/online](http://www.saiglobal.com/online)

*AS/NZS 4576: 1995 - Guidelines for Scaffolding*  
*AS/NZS 1576.1:2010 - Scaffolding, general requirements*

Victorian Scaffold Safety Committee

[The Guide to Safer Scaffolds](#)

For further information, contact WorkSafe's Advisory Service on (03) 9641 1444 or free call 1800 136 089

**Note:** This guidance material has been prepared using the best information available to WorkSafe, and should be used for general use only. Any information about legislative obligations or responsibilities included in this material is only applicable to the circumstances described in the material. You should always check the legislation referred to in this material and make your own judgement about what action you may need to take to ensure you have complied with the law. Accordingly, WorkSafe cannot be held responsible and extends no warranties as to the suitability of the information for your specific circumstances; or actions taken by third parties as a result of information contained in the guidance material.