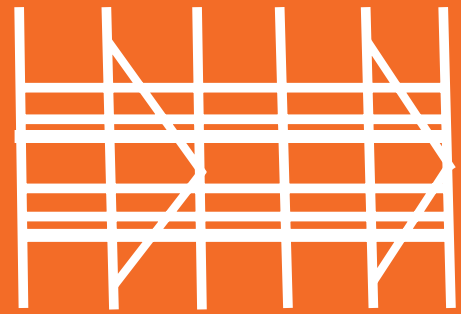


Toolbox Talk

Using Scaffolds



About this toolbox talk

This toolbox talk can be delivered by construction site supervisors, and provides basic safety tips for workers who work on **large prefabricated modular scaffolds**.

A person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) has the responsibility to ensure the safety of workers, including consulting with workers and providing the appropriate safety systems and equipment on-site.

Planning for safety, using safe work method statements (SWMS), holding toolbox talks and providing safety

equipment that eliminates or controls the risk, helps ensure workers go home safely at the end of the day.

Only a licenced scaffolder can erect, alter or dismantle a scaffold where the risk of a person or object falling is more than 4 metres. This includes both large prefabricated modular scaffolds and mobile scaffolds.

On-the-spot fines of up to \$3,600 apply for altering a scaffold without a licence or failing to protect workers from the risk of falls from heights.

Include these workers in your talk

- Sub-contractors
- Labourers
- Employees
- Labour hire workers
- Trade supervisors

- Find a quiet area, free from loud noise, so that your workers can hear you.
- Have a pen and notebook to jot down any safety suggestions from workers.
- Print out the SafeWork NSW "Working at heights in construction" web page to hand out to workers -or send them the web link.
- Consider showing a "[Scaffold Safety](#)" video such as this -or send workers the video web link.

Preparing for the talk

- Have a prefabricated modular scaffold available for the practical demonstration.
- Check the scaffold is in good condition. If it has missing components, you need to ensure these are fixed by a licenced scaffolder, or the incomplete sections cordoned off to workers.

The facts

Read out to workers

Falls from heights is the biggest killer on NSW construction sites.

Most serious and fatal falls are from a height of less than 4 metres. That's about 1 or 2 lifts for a typical scaffold.

Only a licenced scaffolder can erect, alter or dismantle a scaffold where the risk of a person or object falling is more than 4 metres. This includes unlicensed workers not being allowed to remove components.

It doesn't matter how far you fall. If you land on your head on concrete, or are impaled, you can be seriously injured or even killed.

Workers are most at risk of falling from a large prefabricated modular scaffold if:

- it has missing components, such as missing planks, handrails or mid rails – usually because unlicensed workers removed these for access or it was a dodgy build
- if workers don't use it properly, such as climbing on top of the rails or on the outside of the structure.

Before you step on to the scaffold

Read out to workers

Lots of workers just want to get in and get the job done. But a little bit of up-front planning and checking can make the difference between going home safely or living with a life-long devastating injury.

Ask your workers

What things should you check, prior to getting on a scaffold?

Possible answers:

- ☐ View the safe work method statement for scaffold use for this site.
- ☐ Do a visual check from the ground to see if it looks safe eg:
 - Is it on solid foundations?
 - Are there planks or rails missing?
 - Is it adequately tied to the building?
 - Is there safe access to the level you need to work on?
- ☐ Can you do your work from the current platform configuration?
- ☐ How can you safely get your equipment on to the scaffold?
- ☐ Will your supplies and equipment still be under the duty rating (weight limits)?
- ☐ What activity is taking place above and below the work platform you will use?
- ☐ Has it been inspected by a competent person in the last 30 days or less (e.g., scaff tag)?

What to do if the scaffold looks unsafe

Read out to workers

It is the principal contractor and site supervisor's responsibility to ensure the scaffold is safe to use for the duration of the build.

Ask your workers

What should you do if the scaffold looks unsafe?

Possible answers

- ☐ Do not use the scaffold if it has falls risks or looks unsafe.
- ☐ Hang an 'out of service' or 'no access' sign at the scaffold entrance.
- ☐ Advise other trades it is unsafe.
- ☐ Never alter the scaffold, unless you hold a scaffolding high risk work licence..
- ☐ Talk to your supervisor or contact the scaffold supplier to get it fixed.

Using the scaffold - what could have been done differently?

This scenario has been taken from a real-life scaffold incident reported to SafeWork NSW

Read out to workers

Fall from a prefabricated modular scaffold

Charbel* was contracted to paint the façade of a newly built two storey house. He was sitting on the planks of a perimeter scaffold on the southern edge, stretching out to paint a window. It appears that a plank had previously been moved to allow for access to the façade, and not put back properly. It slipped underneath him and he fell approximately two metres to the lower level of the scaffold.

Charbel was taken by the ambulance to hospital, where it was found he fractured his left tibia and fibula.

He was lucky his injuries weren't more serious, but it still meant he couldn't work or play soccer for the next 12 weeks. He also missed out on a hunting trip with his cousins and a family holiday.

Ask your workers

What could have been done differently?

Possible answers

- ☐ Have licenced scaffolders alter the scaffold properly to allow for façade access.
- ☐ Regular inspections of the scaffold by the supervisor to make sure it was safe.
- ☐ Supervisor shouldn't have let other trades alter the scaffold.
- ☐ Done a visual check for missing or altered components before using it.
- ☐ Refused to use the scaffold.
- ☐ Reported the unsafe scaffold to his site supervisor or scaffold supplier.

*Names and some details changed to protect the privacy of the injured workers

Scaffold safety demonstration

Point out to your workers what to look for on a large prefabricated modular scaffold to make sure it is safe to use. Use the below image to help you identify the key safety checks workers can do.

These are some of the things that you should visually check from the ground, before using a scaffold:



- 1 Constructed on solid foundations (using 1 sole board preferably)
- 2 Mesh installed to prevent debris falling onto neighbouring properties
- 3 Diagonal bracing installed (every 4th bay)
- 4 Adequately tied to the supporting structure
- 5 Platforms are not overloaded with materials
- 6 Handrails & mid-rails installed (to prevent external & internal falls)
- 7 Kickboards installed to all working decks
- 8 Safe access and egress onto stairs and between deck levels
- 9 Scaff tag at scaffold entrance – showing last inspection no more than 30 days ago

What do we do now?

Read out to workers

There are so many ways where you can work more safely. Planning, preparation and the right safety equipment can mean the difference between workers going home at the end of the day, or facing a lengthy and painful recovery.

Safety is everyone's responsibility. Speak up on-site about safety if you have any concerns.

Site supervisor notes:

AFTER THE TALK

- Consider the answers workers provided during the talk to see if there are any improvements you can make to scaffold safety on your site.
- Review and update your safe work method statement and/or site rules.
- Communicate any changes/safety improvements to workers.
- Check your workers are using scaffolds safely.
- Check your scaffolds daily or prior to work to ensure they are complete and safe. Use SafeWork's [Scaffold Safety Checklist](#) for site supervisors to help you identify key safety issues.

WHERE TO GET HELP

Contact SafeWork NSW on 13 10 50 or see safework.nsw.gov.au

Other resources:

- [Scaffold inspection checklist for site supervisors](#)
- [Scaffold handover certificate -example template](#)
- [Safe work method statement template](#)
- [SafeWork NSW small business \\$1000 rebate](#)
- [SafeWork NSW – Erecting, altering and dismantling scaffold – prefabricated steel modular](#)
- [Safe Work Australia – Scaffolds and scaffolding work general guide](#)
- [Safe Work Australia – Guide for scaffold inspection and maintenance](#)

Record of Toolbox Talk

Business Name

Date

Name of Supervisor or Presenter

Time

Workers Present

Name	Signature	Name	Signature

Topics Discussed

Comments/Feedback

Disclaimer