

# Weekly Safety Meetings

Safety Training for the Construction Industry

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Membership

Volume 39 Issue 1 January 4, 2016

## Scaffolds

OSHA estimates that 2.3 million construction workers—a full 65% of the industry—work on scaffolds on a regular basis. And scaffold problems are just as common; scaffolding was the third most cited OSHA standard last year. When asked what went wrong, workers who were injured in scaffold accidents tend to point to three problems: failure of a plank or a support, slipping, and being struck by an object that fell from the scaffold. Scaffold safety starts before setup and doesn't end until after teardown is complete.

You can't set up a scaffold without the help of a competent person. Remember that a competent person is someone who has the ability to identify existing and predictable hazards, and—importantly—has the authority to make corrections.

Carefully inspect all scaffold components that you are going to use. If a part is broken, damaged, or just looks iffy, remove it from service or check with the competent person. Remember that nails, pieces of welding rod, and stray pieces of wire are not acceptable replacements for scaffold pins.

Make sure that all planking is scaffold-grade lumber and not just construction-grade wood. Scaffold-grade lumber can withstand forces that ordinary wood cannot. Using construction-grade lumber on a scaffold platform not only violates OSHA standards, it's also very unsafe, and an invitation to a deadly accident. Planking with excessive saw cuts, splits, or loose knots should be taken out of service. You have to be able to see the planks clearly to know if they're in good shape, so planks covered with

plaster, mortar, layers of paint, etc., should be taken out of service. Deadly splits could be hiding under these coatings. Always keep planks tight and secure.

Use mudsills under scaffolds that are going to be installed in mud, or on soft or frozen ground. Many scaffold companies cut up old scaffold planks and use them for mudsills. If a scaffold plank has been used as a mudsill, it is no longer fit to be used on a scaffold platform. Scaffolds should never be supported by cardboard boxes, bricks, concrete blocks, or any material that could crack and break.

The height of a stationary scaffold should never exceed four times the minimum width, unless you tie it back or secure it in some other way so it cannot fall over. Tiebacks are required every 26 feet vertically, and every 30 feet horizontally. Install all of the cross-braces. Fall protection is required for everyone who is 10 feet or more above the ground while working on a scaffold. Guardrails must be used on open sides and ends of each landing. Inspect every scaffold before each shift begins. Many contractors use a tagging system to inform a scaffold user about whether it is safe to use the scaffold. If tags or other signs are used on scaffolds where you work, make certain that you understand what each tag, sign, or identifier means. Never get on a scaffold that you don't trust.

### SAFETY REMINDER

**Do not overload scaffold planks. Don't guess. Refer to span charts to determine the load capacity.**

### NOTES:

SPECIAL TOPICS /EMPLOYEE SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS/NOTES:

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SUPERVISOR:

ATTENDEES:

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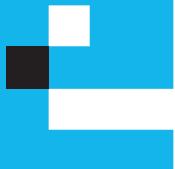
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## Rigging for Crane Lifts

Cranes are a pretty important part of construction, and rigging is an essential part of crane work. Riggers prepare equipment and materials to be lifted by cranes. When rigging mistakes are made, everyone in the area is in danger, because if the load slips or the rigging fails, it is very likely that workers and/or bystanders could be injured or killed. Rigging may seem pretty simple, but it can be a complicated operation. It's important to do it safely.

**Review the lift plan.** When you're making a high, heavy, complicated, or critical lift, a written lift plan is very important. Everyone involved in the lift should review the plan and understand it. Teamwork is doubly important on difficult lifts.

**Inspect all the rigging before hooking up a load.** Look at the nylon slings. Check for cuts, abrasions, and defects that could cause a failure. Inspect the wire rope; look for kinks, cuts, and gouges, and keep an eye out for broken strands. Make sure that shackles, pins, and hooks aren't bent or stretched from overloading. Don't use bent or sprung hooks. If you have any doubts, remove the component from service, tag it, and get a replacement before you make the lift.

**Know the weight of the load and understand the limits of the crane and the rigging gear.** Overloading the crane can damage the crane and could cause it to tip over or collapse. Exceeding the capacity of the rigging gear can mean dropping the load. In both cases, overloading can

lead to catastrophic results. As Dirty Harry once said, "A man's got to know his limitations."

**Control the load during the lift.** Make sure you identify the center of gravity of the load and set the rigging to keep the load stable throughout the whole lift. Use tag lines to help control the load as it's lifted, and to guide it into position once it reaches its destination.

### As a rigger, you should:

- Pay very close attention to where you put your hands, fingers, and feet. Keep them out of pinch points. You don't want your body parts to get caught between the load and the rigging.
- Use proper hand signals to communicate with the crane operator, especially when the operator is not able to see the load.
- Check for overhead power lines before starting a lift. Use a designated spotter to make sure required clearances are maintained at all times.
- Avoid lifts near stacked material that could be knocked over if the load swings to the side.
- Stop the lift when any potentially unsafe conditions are present.

### SAFETY REMINDER

**Anticipate where a load could go if it swings, then make certain that you won't be between it and a fixed object.**

### NOTES:

SPECIAL TOPICS /EMPLOYEE SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS/NOTES:

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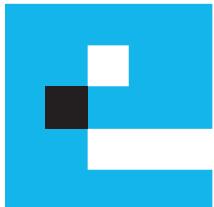
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# How to Avoid Forklift Tipovers

Using forklifts on the jobsite can reduce your chances of suffering back injuries caused by lifting and carrying heavy or bulky objects. However, with convenience comes risk. Forklift tipovers are the leading cause of forklift-related deaths. Most fatalities happen when a worker is crushed by a forklift that has overturned. Let's focus on how to avoid forklift tipovers.

First, remember that it is against the law for anyone under the age of 18 to operate a forklift. Secondly, before anyone can operate a forklift, he or she must be trained and certified. Forklift operators need to follow safe operating rules at all times in order to prevent accidents, property damage, injuries, and fatalities.

**What can cause a forklift to tip over?** Driving a forklift on a slope with the load facing downhill can cause you to lose control. Instead, back the forklift down the slope, keeping the load on the uphill side. And always use extra caution when traveling in reverse. Surface conditions can cause tipovers. Bumps, holes, curbs, ruts, driveway and floor edges, and soft spots in the ground can cause you to tip over. Here are some other choices that can lead to tipovers: driving too fast, turning too sharply, turning on an incline, and driving along an incline instead of straight up or down that incline.

**To avoid tipovers and to protect yourself when operating a forklift, take the following steps:**

- Before you operate any forklift, conduct an inspection using the checklist for that lift.

- Always wear the seat belt when you operate a sit-down-type forklift. Your chances of being crushed by the forklift are greatly reduced if you stay inside the operator's compartment.
  - Do not handle loads that are heavier than the rated capacity of the forklift. Make sure you know the capacity of the forklift you use.
  - Keep the load tilted slightly back toward the lift and as close to the ground as possible.
  - Do not raise or lower the forks while the forklift is moving.
  - Use extreme caution on grades and ramps.
  - Operate the forklift at a speed that will allow you to stop it safely.
  - Slow down for curves, bumps, grade changes, and turns.

For tipovers on sit-down, construction-style forklifts, you should not attempt to jump out of the forklift. You could easily be crushed by the roll cage or another part of the truck after you jump. Instead, stay with the forklift. The seat belt will help keep you in the cab. Hold on to the steering wheel tightly. Brace your feet. Lean in the opposite direction of the overturn, and lean slightly forward.

**SAFETY REMINDER**

**Operators: be aware of co-workers working nearby.**  
**Bystanders: stay alert and listen for back-up alarms.**

**NOTES:**

**SPECIAL TOPICS /EMPLOYEE SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS/NOTES:**

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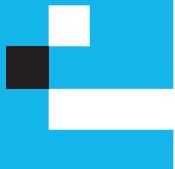
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## Temporary Wiring and Electrical Cords

A lot of construction work has to happen before a permanent electrical system is installed in a new building. Often, workers have to depend on temporary electrical systems to power their tools and equipment. Because temporary wiring is "temporary," it can be tempting to play fast and loose with the rules. But temporary or not, the electricity is powerful and dangerous. Qualified electricians should be responsible for planning and installing even the temporary wiring on the job. They need to make sure that the wiring will safely carry the current that is needed to run all of the tools and equipment you need to use.

So you're not an electrician; what does this mean for you? For starters, you can pay a little attention to where you plug in your power tools. You can make sure that outlets are secure in junction boxes and that they don't have char marks on them. You should be plugging into outlets protected by GFCIs. Only use real outlets; don't hot-wire a cord, tool, light, or extension cord by hooking it up to bare wires. Don't connect any wires to an electrical panel or junction box unless you're an electrician and you know how the temporary wiring is set up.

Extension cords are used all over construction sites. All extension cords used in construction must be designed for hard or extra-hard use. Look for designations like S, ST, SO, and STO printed on the outer insulation. Don't use household extension cords for construction work. All extension cords must have a functioning ground prong. Never remove the ground prong from a plug.

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