

How to Use a Scaffold Tower Safely



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According to the 2015 Safety Report of the National Access and Scaffolding Confederation (NASC), scaffolding accidents rose by 9 percent over the previous year, with 105 accidents reported in 2014 compared to 96 in 2013.

Although there were no fatal accidents, there were 24 falls from height in 2014, with the highest fall recorded a fall from 6 metres, which qualifies as a serious, life-threatening fall. Falls from height are far from the only accidents that occur when using scaffolding, as there are also slips, trips and falls on the same level, manual handling accidents, and falls of materials.

Fortunately, there was a 5 percent decrease in slip, trip and fall accidents from the previous year, as well as a decrease in the number of accidents involving trainees, which indicates that workers are working more safely with scaffolding on construction sites across the country.

Here are a few tips to help you use a scaffold tower safely.

Provide Workers with Training

Workers who work on scaffolding are required to be competent for the type of scaffolding they are erecting, according to national safety regulations. This does not necessarily mean that businesses need to provide all their employees with training, however, it does mean that they need to be aware of their workers' experience and qualifications when assigning worksite tasks.

Providing workers with scaffolding training is highly advisable as this creates a more competent, skilled and safety conscious workforce that is less likely to experience on-site accidents.

Prepare the Site Beforehand

The site on which the scaffold tower will be erected needs to be prepared beforehand. Generally speaking, this takes very little time to do, depending on the condition of site and the ground/surface where the scaffold tower will be placed, though workers should always:

- Ensure the surface is stable, even and level
- Check the ground for pipes, wiring, etc.
- Check for hazards, including overhead wires

Once the site has been prepared and checked to ensure it is free of hazards, workers can then begin erecting the scaffold tower. Many scaffold towers are very simple in design and easy to erect (a single person can erect our First 5 DIY Aluminium Scaffold Tower, even someone new to DIY/handyman tasks), but that doesn't mean the job should be rushed.

Take the time to make sure that the braces are in place and the legs plumb, the cross members are locked, and double-check the deck, guardrails, planks, locks and ties to ensure they are completely secure. According to the HSE, scaffolds need to be checked after installation and before use, and then at least once every seven

days.

Watch the Load Capacity

Not exceeding the load capacity is crucially important if accidents are to be avoided when using scaffolding, so check the SWL (Safe Working Load) before buying or hiring scaffolding and make sure this weight limit isn't exceeded when in use as it could cause the tower to collapse.

Top Tower has a broad range of quality scaffold towers to suit all worksites and work tasks, from painting and decorating around the home to bricklaying on commercial construction sites.