



## General access scaffolds and ladders

### Construction Information Sheet No 49 (revision)

#### Introduction

Falls from a height continue to be the biggest killer on construction sites. This information sheet provides advice for users of ladders and access scaffolds. It will also help those who select and specify equipment.

Work at height should be carried out from a platform with suitable edge protection. Occasionally this may not be possible and a ladder may have to be used. However, ladders are best used as a means of getting to a workplace and should only be used as a workplace for light work of short duration.

#### Selecting equipment

When deciding what equipment to use think about what the job includes, how long it will last and where it needs to be done. It is tempting to use a ladder for all sorts of work but you should always consider a working platform first, for example, a properly erected mobile scaffold tower or a mobile elevated working platform (MEWP).

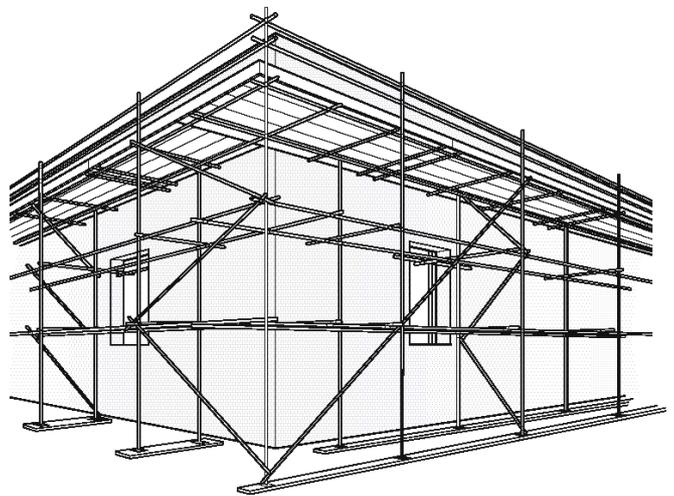
Jobs such as removing or installing guttering, installing replacement windows, painting or demolition work should usually be carried out from scaffolds or mobile access equipment.

#### Protecting the public

- Contact the appropriate highway authority before erecting a scaffold on a public highway *or* on any roads, pavements, paths or routes used by the public.
- Ensure the scaffold is designed to carry the load from stored materials and equipment.
- Scaffolds should be designed to prevent materials falling. You may need to provide brickguards, netting or sheeting. Where the risk is high, or for example during demolition or facade cleaning, you should provide extra protection in the form of scaffold fans or covered walkways.
- In populated areas such as town centres, erecting and dismantling scaffolds should preferably be undertaken during quiet times. People should be prevented, with suitable barriers and signs, from walking under the scaffold during erection or dismantling.
- Stop unauthorised access onto the scaffold, for example by removing all ladders at ground level, whenever it is left unattended.
- Never 'bomb' materials from a scaffold. Use mechanical hoists or rubbish chutes to move materials and waste.

#### Scaffold erection

- A scaffold should be designed, erected, altered and dismantled by competent people, with all scaffolding work under the supervision of a 'competent person'.
- Scaffolders should always adopt a safe system of work during the erection, altering and dismantling of scaffolds. This will usually include the use of fall arrest equipment.



Typical independent tied scaffolding.

- All scaffolds require bracing to help prevent them from collapsing. The platform of a general purpose scaffold should be at least four boards wide. All scaffolds, including 'independent' scaffolds, should be securely tied, or otherwise supported. More ties will be required if:
  - the scaffold is sheeted or netted due to the increased wind loading;
  - it is used as a loading platform for materials or equipment; or
  - hoists, lifting appliances or rubbish chutes are attached to it.
- System scaffolds should be erected following the manufacturer's instructions and may require more tying than independent scaffolds.

#### Safe use of scaffolds

- Do not take up boards, move handrails or remove ties to gain access for work.
- Changes should only be made by a competent scaffolder.
- Never work from platforms that are not fully boarded.

- Do not overload scaffolds. Make sure they are designed to take the loads put on them. Store materials so the load is spread evenly.
- Make sure there is suitable stair and ladder access onto the working platform.

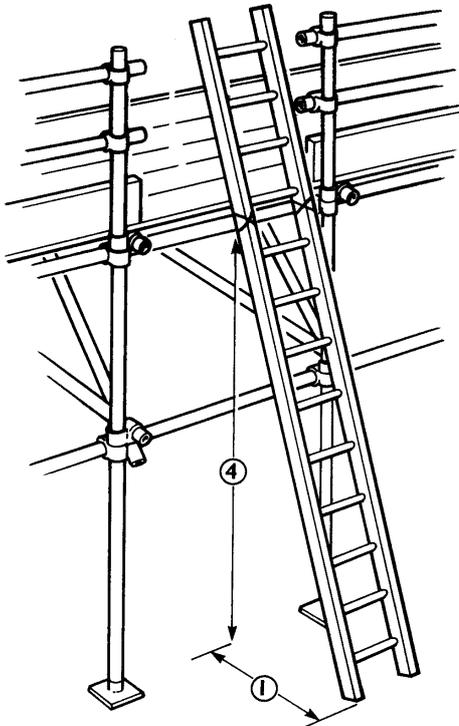
### Scaffold inspection

- Scaffolds must be inspected by a competent person:
  - before first use;
  - after substantial alteration;
  - after any event likely to have affected their stability, for example, following strong winds; and
  - at regular intervals not exceeding seven days.

Any faults found must be put right.

- Before contractors allow their workers to use someone else's scaffold they must make sure it is safe.

### Ladders



Ladders should be correctly angled one out for every four up.

- Ladders should be in good condition and examined regularly for defects. You should have a management system in place to ensure that this is done.
- They should be secured so they cannot slip, usually by tying them at the top.
- The ladder should be angled to minimise the risk of slipping outwards and as a rule of thumb needs to be 'one out for every four up'.
- Access ladders should extend about 1 m above the working platform. This provides a handhold for people getting on and off.

- Do not overreach: if you are working from a ladder, make sure it is long enough and positioned to reach the work safely.
- Do not climb or work off a ladder unless you can hold onto it.

### Stepladders

- Do not use the top platform of a stepladder unless it is designed with special handholds.
- Ensure stepladders are positioned on level ground and used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

### Legal requirements

Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974  
 Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999  
 Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998  
 Construction (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1996

### References and further information

BS 5973:1993 *Code of practice for access and working scaffolds and special scaffold structures in steel*

*Tower scaffolds* CIS10 (rev) HSE Books 1997

*Inspections and reports* CIS47 HSE Books 1997

*Health and safety in construction* HSG150 (2nd edition) HSE Books 2001 ISBN 0 7176 2106 5

*Protecting the public: Your next move* HSG151 HSE Books 2001 ISBN 0 7176 1148 5

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This leaflet contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

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