

OSHA Training Toolbox Talk: Basic Scaffold Safety – The Role of the Competent Person for Scaffolding

[Reference 1910 Subpart D / 1926 Subpart L]

While most scaffolding is designed for ease of erection and use, there are still many hazards associated with scaffolding that can result in someone getting injured or even killed. Because of the various hazards associated with scaffolding, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, also called OSHA, requires employers to designate someone at every work site where scaffolding is used by their employees to perform critical functions to help ensure the safety of those employees who work on and around the scaffolding. And the person responsible for doing this is known as the “**Competent Person**”.

Here is an overview of a few of the major duties performed by the Competent Person at a job site where scaffolding is being utilized:

- **The Competent Person** is responsible for overseeing the erection of all scaffolding to ensure it is set up as designed per the scaffold manufacturer instructions. Conversely, the Competent Person must also oversee the disassembly of scaffolding, as well as the movement of any scaffolding, to ensure these activities are done safely;
- **The Competent Person** must also inspect scaffolding as soon as it has been erected, as well as before first use on each shift, to identify any hazards that need to be corrected before employee use. And additional inspections by the Competent Person must be performed after any hazard increasing occurrence;
- **The Competent Person** will also make sure that any powered scaffolding system is functioning and operated safely per the manufacturer’s instructions;
- **The Competent Person** must ensure scaffolding is maintained as required per the manufacturer, and to oversee any modifications, alterations, or repairs to the scaffolding that may become necessary while it is in use;
- **The Competent Person** must make sure scaffolding in use is capable of supporting the loads to which it is subjected, and to see that it does not become overloaded during use;
- And last but certainly not least, **The Competent Person** must have the authority from his or her employer to remove or prevent workers from using any scaffolding found to be unsafe until the hazard has been corrected, repaired, or the scaffolding is removed from service.

However, the Competent Person cannot be present everywhere on the jobsite, nor can they see everything that is going on. That is why the next several toolbox talks will be dedicated to educating us on some basic Federal OSHA regulations pertaining to scaffold design and use, so we can be better prepared to identify some of the most common hazards to watch for when we work with scaffolding. And when you do see a potential problem, be sure to take steps to ensure the safety of yourself and others, and then inform the Competent Person or your supervisor of what you’ve seen.

Do you know who the Competent Person for scaffolding is at our worksite? [*Identify your competent person(s) for scaffolding*]. Thank you for your participation, and please be sure to sign your name on the training certification form so you get credit for attending today’s training session.