SCAFFOLD SAFETY

For Residential Construction Contractors

Scaffolds can provide a safer and more efficient way to work than ladders, but they must be set up properly. The majority of construction workers who fall to their death in Massachusetts fall from scaffolds.

As you can see from the examples below, falls can happen to anyone: experienced, inexperienced, young, or old.

A 29-year-old carpenter fell 19 feet to his death from an unguarded carpenter’s bracket scaffold attached to a window frame of a home. The carpenter was scraping snow off the roof. He slipped off the platform as snow accumulated around his feet.

A 69-year-old mason renovating a single family home fell 20 feet from an unguarded pipe scaffold. The staging was set 10 feet from the house due to a second floor deck, and a plank walkway had been rigged for roof access. The mason fell to his death when the plank slipped.

General Provisions for All Scaffolds:

- Scaffold should be assembled under the supervision and direction of a competent person.
- Provide safe ladder access—never climb on braces or structural members/frames.
- Use scaffold-grade lumber for platforms.
- Install guardrails and toeboards on all scaffolds that are 10 feet or 2 frames above the ground (whichever is less).
- Train all personnel in the safe use (training and inspection by a competent person).
- Ensure structure is capable of supporting 4 times the maximum intended load, including its own weight.

For example: A pump jack scaffold with poles placed 10 feet apart and two 2”x10” scaffold grade planks will be strong enough to hold up to 500 pounds, including people and equipment.

Additional Information

On-site Consultation Program
Massachusetts Department of Labor Standards
(508) 616-0461
www.mass.gov/dols

OSHA Regional Office
JFK Federal Building - Room E340
Boston, MA 02203
(617) 565-9860
www.osha.gov

The Center for Construction Research and Training
Scaffold safety materials and resources at:
www.cpwr.com

MA FACE Project
Occupational Health Surveillance Program
Massachusetts Department of Public Health
250 Washington Street
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 624-6527
www.mass.gov/dph/FACE

FACE is an occupational injury prevention project conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. FACE is not responsible for the enforcement of safety standards. FACE investigates workplace fatalities to identify risk factors that lead to fatal injury in order to prevent future deaths.

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**Pump Jack Scaffold**

- Use wooden poles up to 30 feet; aluminum poles up to 50 feet.
- Install guardrails. Workbench may serve as top guardrail.
- Secure poles to house with rigid triangular bracing at the top, bottom, and other points as necessary.
- Make sure poles are plumb.
- Platforms should be fully planked and secure.
- Do not sit or stand on workbench platforms.

**Carpenter's Bracket**

- Platform must be a minimum of 12 inches wide.
- Ensure brackets are attached to stud or structural member of building.
- Install guardrails.

**Tubular Welded**

- Cross brace the scaffold.
- Secure to building.
- Install guardrails.
- Provide access ladder.
- Fully plank all levels to be accessed.
- Distribute load evenly on platform.

**Ladder Jack: least preferred**

- Do not use over 20 feet in height.
- Platforms should be a minimum of 12 inches wide. Do not bridge platforms to each other.
- Secure ladders to prevent slipping.
- Provide access ladder.

!! Caution: Ladder jacks are the least safe of all staging types. Try to minimize use. OSHA requires personal fall protection to be used on these scaffolds over 10 feet.

!! Caution: Never combine pump jack scaffolds with ladder jacks unless you do not intend to adjust the height of the pump jack.

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**Note:** Inexpensive guardrail holders are available for all types of scaffolds.

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**Electrocution Hazard:**

- Beware of electrocution hazard when assembling, using, or dismantling scaffolds near power lines. Call the electric company for assistance.

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**Caution:** Careful footing is critical for the stability of these scaffolds.