

Working on scaffolds in residential construction

OHS information for work site parties

This bulletin provides occupational health and safety information about working on scaffolds in residential construction, with a focus on common issues seen by Alberta Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) during compliance inspections in the sector.

KEY INFORMATION

- Working on a scaffold involves hazards that can cause a fatality or serious injury.
- Occupational health and safety legal requirements apply to scaffolds and scaffolding work. Many are specified in Part 23 of the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Code (OHS Code).

Introduction

The OHS Code defines a *scaffold* as “a temporary work platform and its supporting structure that is used for supporting workers, materials or both”. (Note: The code definition also excludes some specific types of work platforms.)

Scaffold work involves hazards that can cause a serious injury or fatality. Alberta’s OHS laws include many provisions to keep scaffold workers safe (most in Part 23 of the code). In monitoring compliance with these, OHS officers observe frequent issues with certain requirements. These frequently missed or misconstrued requirements are introduced in this bulletin.

Note however that this is only a high-level overview and that many requirements from Part 23 of the OHS Code are not included in this bulletin. Also, other parts of OHS legislation may apply.

CONSULT THE LAW

Remember to always consult the law directly. Note that you can use the Government of Alberta’s [OHS legislation search tool](#) to quickly find, download or share individual sections of the OHS Act, Regulation and Code.

Common compliance issues related to Part 23

Scaffold design

Employers must ensure that a single-pole or double-pole scaffold is:

- supported against lateral movement by adequate bracing,
- anchoring by one tie-in for each 4.6 metre vertical interval and one tie-in for each 6.4 metre horizontal interval,
- anchored by one tie-in for each three metre vertical and one tie-in for each three metre horizontal if the scaffold is hoarded, and
- set plumb on a base plate, jackscrew or other load dispersing device on a stable surface.

Employers must ensure commercially manufactured metal scaffolding is erected, used, inspected, maintained and dismantled in accordance with the manufacturer’s specifications or specifications certified by a professional engineer.

Scaffold load

Employers must ensure the load placed on a scaffold never exceeds the equivalent of one-quarter of the load for which it is designed. Employers must also ensure all workers on a scaffold are informed of the maximum load that the scaffold is permitted to carry.

CSA standard

Subject to the OHS Code’s scaffold design and load provisions (Sections 324 and 325), employers must ensure scaffolds erected to provide working platforms during the construction, alteration, repair or demolition of buildings and other structures comply with CSA Standard CAN/CSA S269.2-M87 (R2003), *Access Scaffolding for Construction Purposes*.

Scaffold tagging

Employers must ensure each scaffold is colour coded using a tag at each point of entry indicating its status and condition, as follows:

- a green tag with “Safe for Use”, or similar wording, to indicate it is safe for use,
- a yellow tag with “Caution: Potential or Unusual Hazard”, or similar wording, to indicate the presence of a potential or unusual hazard, or
- a red tag with “Unsafe for Use”, or similar wording, to indicate it is not safe to use.

These tags must include:

- the duty rating of the scaffold,
- the date on which the scaffold was last inspected,
- the name of the competent worker who last inspected the scaffold,
- any precautions to be taken while working on the scaffold, and
- the expiry date of the tag.

A tag attached to a scaffold expires 21 calendar days after the date of the inspection it records.

Except for competent workers involved in the erection, inspection, or dismantling of a scaffold, no worker is allowed to use a scaffold if it has:

- a red tag,
- a green or yellow tag that has expired, or
- no tag at all.

Vertical ladders

Employers must ensure that the vertical ladders attached to a scaffold that give access to working levels of a scaffold are securely fastened to the scaffold. They must ensure that vertical ladders are used by workers only to move up or down between levels of the scaffold.

Working from ladders

Employers must ensure no worker performs work from a ladder that is used to give access to the working levels of a scaffold.

Scaffold planks

Employers must ensure planks to be used in a scaffold are visually inspected by a competent worker before it is installed in a scaffold. If the visual inspection reveals damage that could affect a plank’s strength or function, the employer must ensure the plank passes a load test before it is installed in a scaffold.

Employers must ensure that commercially manufactured scaffold planks are used, stored, inspected and maintained according to the manufacturer’s specifications.

Employers must ensure scaffold planks are secured to prevent movement in any direction that may create a danger to a worker, and any overlapping planks must extend at least 300 millimetres beyond a ledger.

Scaffold platform

Employers must ensure there are no open spaces of more than 250 millimetres between a scaffold platform and a structure. Employers must also ensure scaffold platforms are continuous around obstructions that would create openings a worker might step into or fall through.

Specific scaffold types

Part 23 includes many different requirements that only apply to some specific types of scaffolds (such as bracket scaffolds, double-pole scaffolds, needle-beam scaffolds and others). Make sure to consult Part 23 and ensure you’re in compliance with these requirements if applicable.

Other common residential scaffolding compliance issues

OHS requirements outside of Part 23 also apply to residential construction scaffold work. As with the Part 23 requirements, OHS officers also see issues with some of these on a frequent basis. Here's an overview and **you must consult the [OHS Act, Regulation and Code directly](#)** to make sure you comply with all applicable requirements

Working at a height of three metres or more

Section 139(1)(a) of the OHS Code specifies that the employer and a supervisor must ensure their workers are protected from falling if they might fall a vertical distance of three metres or more at a temporary or permanent work area.

restrict their movement. (For scaffolding work, the entrance and exit are usually considered to be the base of the ladder on the ground.)

General duty

Under Section 3 of the OHS Act, employers must ensure the health and safety of workers and other persons at or in the vicinity of the work site, as far as is reasonably practicable. Employers also have other general duties under this section, including the requirement for employers to ensure their workers are adequately trained in all matters necessary to do their work in a healthy and safe manner.

Under Section 4 of the OHS Act, a supervisor's general duties include ensuring that workers under their supervision work according to OHS legal requirements, and reporting concerns about unsafe or harmful work site acts or conditions to the employer.

Hazard assessment and control

Per Section 7(1) of the OHS Code, employers must assess a work site and identify existing and potential hazards before work begins at a work site, or a work site is constructed. They must also prepare a report detailing the results of their hazard assessment and the methods used to eliminate or control the hazards identified [Section 7(2) of the OHS Code].

Manufacturer specifications

Under Section 15.1 of the OHS Code, if the OHS Act, Regulation or Code require work to be done in accordance with a manufacturer's specifications or specifications certified by a professional engineer, the employer must ensure the specifications are readily available to the workers, supervisors and other persons at the work site.

Safe entry and exit

Section 119(3) of the OHS Code requires employers to ensure that a work area's entrances and exits are free from materials, equipment, accumulations of waste or other obstructions that might endanger workers or

Contact us

OHS Contact Centre

Alberta toll-free

- 1-866-415-8690

Edmonton region

- 780-415-8690

Deaf or hard of hearing (TTY)

- 1-800-232-7215 (Alberta toll-free)
- 780-427-9999 (Edmonton region)

Notify OHS of health and safety concerns

alberta.ca/file-complaint-online

Call the OHS Contact Centre if you have concerns that involve immediate danger to a person on a work site.

Report a workplace incident to OHS

alberta.ca/ohs-complaints-incident

Website

alberta.ca/ohs

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To provide feedback on this publication, visit ohs-pubstore.labour.ab.ca/gs021 and click “Give resource feedback”. For more OHS resources, visit the [OHS Resource Portal](#).

For more information

Fall protection plan (GS010)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/gs010

Fall protection plan: information sheet for residential roofing (GS010-1)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/gs010-1

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