



## General access scaffolds and ladders

### Construction Information Sheet No 49

#### Introduction

Falls from a height continue to be the biggest killer on construction sites. This information sheet provides advice for users of ladders and 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. Special considerations apply to the use of personal suspension equipment (eg boatswain's chairs and abseiling equipment). These are not covered in this sheet.

#### 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 it is often much safer to work from, for example, a properly erected mobile scaffold tower.

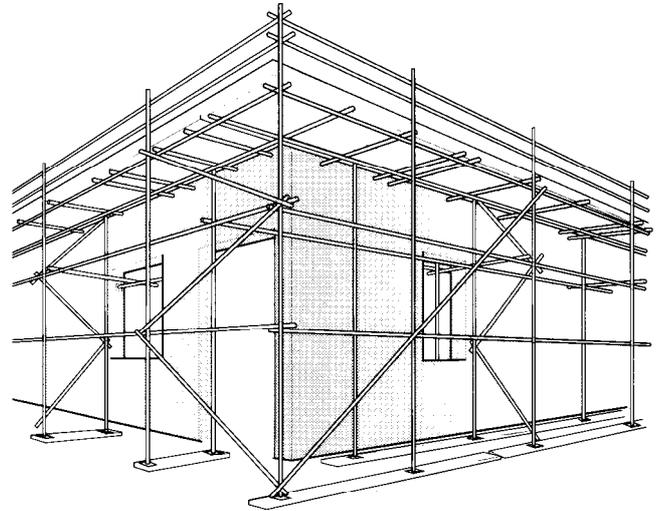
Jobs such as the removal of cast iron guttering, extensive high level painting, demolition work, or any work that cannot be comfortably reached from a ladder should usually be carried out from scaffolds or mobile access equipment.

#### Protecting the public

- Contact the appropriate highway authority before erecting a scaffold on a public highway.
- Minimise the storage of materials and equipment on the scaffold.
- Scaffolds should be designed to prevent materials falling. Brickguards or netting may need to be provided. Where the risk is very high, for example during demolition or facade clearing, provide extra protection in the form of scaffold fans or covered walkways.
- Prevent people walking under the scaffold during erection or dismantling. Close off the area.
- Stop unauthorised access onto the scaffold, eg by removing all ladders at ground level, whenever left unattended.
- Never 'bomb' materials from a scaffold. Where possible, use mechanical hoists or rubbish chutes to move materials and waste.

#### Scaffold erection

- All scaffolding work should be carried out under the supervision of a 'competent person'.
- Scaffolds should only be erected by competent scaffolders. There are a number of training courses available for scaffolders.



*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 (ie increased wind loading);
  - it is used as a loading platform for materials or equipment;
  - hoists, lifting appliances or rubbish chutes are attached to it.

#### 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.

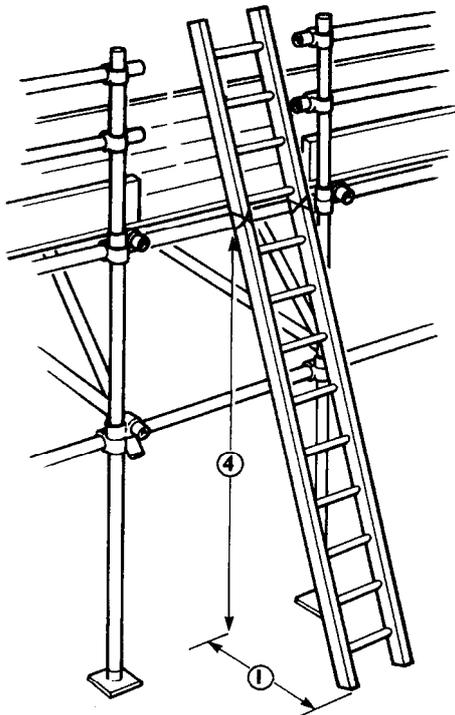
- Avoid overloading the scaffold. Make sure it is designed to take the loads put on it. Store materials so the load is spread evenly.

#### Scaffold inspection

- **Scaffolds must be inspected by a 'competent person' usually at least every 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.**

For more information on inspection and reports, read CIS 47.

#### Ladders



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

- Ladders should be in good condition and examined regularly for defects.
- They should be secured so they cannot slip, usually by tying them at the top.
- Access ladders should extend about 1 m above the working platform. This provides a handhold for people getting on and off.
- Avoid overreaching: 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 and trestles

- Do not use the top platform of a stepladder unless it is designed with special handholds.

- **Trestle platforms and stepladders must not be used as a workplace above 2 m in height unless proper edge protection is provided.**

#### Legal requirements

Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992

Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1992

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* CIS 1 O(rev) HSE Books 1997

*Construction site health and safety checklist* CIS 17 (rev) HSE Books 1994

*Inspections and reports* CIS 47 HSE Books 1997

*Health and safety in construction* HSG 150 HSE Books 1996 ISBN 0 7176 1143 4

*Protecting the public: Your next move* HSG151 HSE Books 1997 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.**

**The leaflet includes mandatory requirements under the Construction (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1996. These are shown in bold type.**

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