OSHA Training Toolbox Talk: Basic Scaffold Safety – Avoiding Electrical Hazards on Scaffolding

[Reference 1910 Subpart D / 1926 Subpart L]

Working on scaffolding presents many potential safety hazards. And none can have more severe consequences than making accidental contact with an energized electrical conductor. There are two primary ways this occurs; workers on scaffolding making inadvertent electrical contact with overhead lines while holding conductive tools or materials, and workers who make accidental electrical contact while they erect or move scaffolding near overhead power lines.

Here are some safety tips to keep in mind to help avoid electrocution by contacting overhead electrical lines when working on scaffolds:

- Conduct an initial survey of the work area at the start of every work-shift to identify any potential overhead electrical hazards such as power lines and cables. Also look before any scaffolds are moved or rolled to a different location. Pay special attention to areas where electrical lines may be sagging, as well as to slopes or other elevation changes in the floor that can change clearance distances or make the scaffold tip or roll out of control.
- Scaffolds and other conductive items should not be used or moved within the following minimum clearance distances from exposed, energized power lines:
  - 2 feet for insulated power lines of less than 300 volts;
  - 10 feet for insulated power lines of 300 volts or more and for all uninsulated power lines.
- If it is absolutely necessary to work within these minimum safe clearance distances, notify your supervisor or the Competent Person so they can notify the utility company to have them de-energize the power lines or cover them with insulating sleeves or blankets before any work is conducted.
- Clearance between the power lines and scaffold should be monitored. If a scaffold is to be moved or erected in the general vicinity of overhead power lines, a competent worker should be assigned to observe the clearance and warn others if the minimum distance is not maintained.
- Electrically conductive tools or materials should not be used by employees working on scaffolds where they may make inadvertent contact with nearby power lines.
  - Non-conductive tools made of fiberglass or other non-conductive materials should be utilized, where possible.
  - Be aware that long pieces of materials, such as pipes, conduit, gutter, and similar objects commonly handled on scaffolds are often made of conductive materials.

These are just a few important safety tips that can help us avoid electrocutions when working on scaffolds. Can anyone think of some others that that you would like to discuss today?

Thank you for your participation. Please make certain you sign your name on the training certification form so you get credit for attending today's toolbox training session on this topic.

OSHA SAFETY TRAINING CERTIFICATION FORM

Toolbox Topic Covered: Basic Scaffold Safety – Avoiding Electrical Hazards on Scaffolding

Company Name: _____ Date: _____

Training led by: _____

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