Ask the Expert: Fall Protection and Scaffolds

Question: Is fall protection required for workers who are using scaffolding as a work platform – not erecting or dismantling scaffolds – just working from them?

Answer: Yes, fall protection of some sort is required for anyone who will be working from a scaffold. The fall protection can be the guardrail system of the scaffolding itself, or a personal fall arrest system – and in some cases both are required, it just depends on the type of scaffold. See the chart below for specific guidance.

In addition, though not part of your question, fall protection is required for those erecting and dismantling scaffolds.

Type of Scaffold	Type of Fall Protection Required
Aerial lifts	Personal fall arrest system
Boatswains' chair	Personal fall arrest system
Catenary scaffold	Personal fall arrest system
Float scaffold	Personal fall arrest system
Ladder jack scaffold	Personal fall arrest system
Needle beam scaffold	Personal fall arrest system
Self-contained scaffold	**Both** a personal adjustable scaffold arrest system **and** a guardrail system
Single-point and two-point suspension scaffolds	Both a personal fall arrest system **and** a guardrail system
Supported scaffold	Personal fall arrest system **or** guardrail system
All other scaffolds not specified above	Personal fall arrest system **or** guardrail systems that meet the required criteria

Crawling board (chicken ladder)	Personal fall arrest system, or a guardrail system, or by a 3/4-inch (1.9 cm) diameter grab-line or equivalent handhold securely fastened beside each crawling board