Scaffold Stats and Facts

DID YOU KNOW?

Any significant construction, restoration, or repair project on a building larger than a doghouse likely involves the use of scaffolding. Sixty-five percent of construction projects in the United States involve the use of scaffolding by an estimated 2.3 million workers, according to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). With that many people and that much usage, construction accidents and serious injuries are apt to happen.

Scaffolds are used by builders and construction workers to elevate themselves, materials and equipment. Sadly, however, what goes up on scaffolding sometimes comes down suddenly and unexpectedly, leading to injuries or death. BLS statistics indicate that scaffolding accidents result in 4,500 injuries and over 60 deaths each year and that almost 30 percent of all workplace deaths from falls involve scaffolding or ladders.

Scaffolding's potential for tragic injuries – whether to construction workers, pedestrians, or others near work sites – is one reason that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has established extensive and detailed safety rules regarding the assembly and use of scaffolds and the training and precautions workers need to take. OSHA revised and strengthened these standards after a 1996 BLS study revealed that 25 percent of workers hurt in scaffold accidents received no scaffold safety training, and 77 percent of scaffolds lacked guardrails. But as stringent as these rules are now, they may not always be followed, and compliance can't prevent all accidents.

How Scaffolding Accidents and Injuries Occur

According to a recent BLS report, more than 70 percent of scaffold accident injuries are caused by:

- Scaffold support or planking giving way, either due to defective or damaged equipment or improper assembly, leading to falls and injuries to those below
- Slipping or tripping while on a scaffold due to such factors as slippery surfaces, an unsafe incline or insufficient planking, leading to falls where guardrails, a safety harness, or proper training were lacking.
- Falling objects hitting either a worker on a scaffold or those below.

Other scaffold accidents can involve improper placement of scaffolds and equipment too close to power or other utility lines, leading to electrocution.

The very nature of scaffold accidents –usually involving people and objects falling from significant heights – means that when accidents happen, the injuries that follow tend to be serious or fatal. Common scaffold accident injuries include:

- Spinal cord injury
- Traumatic brain injury
- Paralysis
- Broken bones
- Organ damage
- Lacerations

Speak to a Michigan Construction Accident Lawyer Today

For workers injured in scaffolding accidents, workers' compensation provides essential benefits that can help them recover. But those benefits don't always cover all of the losses sustained after a workplace accident, nor are they available to non-workers injured in a scaffolding mishap. In such cases, the experienced trial attorneys at Sommers Schwartz can explore other avenues for recovering compensation, such as a personal injury lawsuit against the contractor, scaffold manufacturer, or other third-parties.

If you have been injured or lost a loved one in a scaffold

accident or other construction accident, please contact us to arrange your free initial consultation.

Construction crews rely on scaffolders to erect sturdy platforms for them to stand on when they work on tall buildings, stadiums, bridges and other lofty structures. Some even work in the shipping, oil and mining industries so builders can construct ships, erect oil derricks and support mines. Scaffolders calculate the amount of materials they need for construction projects, such as the wood and steel support tubes, and test the scaffolding for durability. They must disassemble the scaffolding when projects are completed. Scaffolders earn average annual salaries above $30,000.

Wages and Qualifications

Scaffolders, who usually get paid by the hour, earned average annual incomes of $36,000 as of 2013, according to the job website Indeed. This equates to $17.31 per hour, based on a 40-hour work week. Most have at least high school educations and two or more years experience building scaffolds. And since many scaffolders are carpenters, they must complete three- or four-year apprenticeships with experienced carpenters to qualify for carpentry work. Other essential qualifications include physical strength, the ability to stand or kneel for many hours per day, manual dexterity and organizational and problem-solving skills.

Wages by Region

In 2013, average annual incomes for U.S. scaffolders ranged from $25,000 to $42,000, according to Indeed, which equals $12.02 to $20.19 per hour for 40-hour work weeks. In the Northeast region, they earned the lowest incomes of $32,000 in Maine and Pennsylvania and the highest of $42,000 in New York. They earned $25,000 annually in Hawaii and $39,000 in California, which represented the lowest and highest incomes in the West region. Scaffolders in the South region earn $30,000 to $42,000 per year, respectively, in Louisiana and Mississippi. And they earned between $28,000 and $38,000, respectively, in the Midwest region –

with the lowest earnings in South Dakota and highest in Illinois.

Contributing Factors

Scaffolders, as other workers, usually earn more as they gain experience. They may qualify for better-paying jobs when they have five or more years experience. Moreover, scaffolders may also earn more in certain industries. Carpenters who worked in highway and bridge construction, for example, earned higher wages than those who build houses, according to May 2011 BLS data – $25.37 per hour versus $20.15. Wages for scaffolders are likely to be commensurate since many are carpenters. And they earn more in New York and California because of higher living costs in those states.

Job Outlook

Jobs for carpenters, including scaffolders, are expected to increase 20 percent in the next decade, which is faster than the 14 percent national average for all occupations. Job opportunities for scaffolders, as other with other construction workers, are usually contingent on the economy. As the economy continues to rebound from recession lows, “Electric Contractor” magazine expects a five percent increase in the construction industry in 2013. This should also increase available jobs for scaffolders.

2016 Salary Information for Carpenters

Carpenters earned a median annual salary of $43,600 in 2016, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. On the low end, carpenters earned a 25th percentile salary of $33,770, meaning 75 percent earned more than this amount. The 75th percentile salary is $58,700, meaning 25 percent earn more. In 2016, 1,025,600 people were employed in the U.S. as carpenters.