

Pre-fabricated steel modular scaffolding – erecting, altering and dismantling it and managing it

WorkCover NSW, in conjunction with HIA and industry representatives, has published some practical guidance for scaffolders to safely erect, alter and dismantle prefabricated steel modular scaffolding where this information is not available from the manufacturer or supplier and the scaffold is of basic configuration. This information is in the form of an Industry Safety Standard for Erecting, Altering and Dismantling Scaffolding – Part 1: Pre-fabricated Steel Modular Scaffolding (the ‘standard’).

The standard provides some valuable guidance as to what you should be looking out for with respect to the design of the scaffold you are using. If your scaffold meets the design assumptions, you can use the standard as guidance for the practical erection of the scaffold. Some of this practical guidance is summarised below:

Erecting, altering and dismantling the scaffold

- Make sure your scaffolder is a ‘competent person’. Scaffolding from which a person or object could fall more than 4 metres is classified as a high risk activity which would require the scaffolder to have a National Certificate of Competency appropriate for the type of scaffolding they are erecting.
- Ensure that platforms are nominally 2m apart vertically.
- The scaffolder should be able to work from a safe position when installing standards, ledgers, transoms and guardrails and planks for the platform above. The Industry Safety Standard contains possible acceptable methods.
- Safe access should be provided between platforms on the scaffold.
- Guardrails and mid-rails should be installed if the gap between the working face and the platform is greater than 225mm.
- Dismantling should be undertaken in accordance with general precautions and dismantling sequences specified in the safe work method statement.

If you are managing the site

- Ensure you have an OHS management plan on site that identifies who is responsible for controlling the risks associated with the scaffold and that these persons are identified in your site specific inductions.
- Make sure a site-specific risk assessment is carried out and documented which ensures that the scaffolding is not erected near cliff top or high wind areas.
- Make sure there is a safe work method in place that identifies site specific hazards and control measures (e.g. proximity to power lines).
- Platforms should be fully decked.
- Ensure there is a system in place to let workers know which platforms are working platforms and which are not as well as the maximum safe loadings and any other restrictions that apply to the use of the scaffold (e.g. tool box meetings).
- Ensure there is adequate supervision to make sure that control measures are monitored for effectiveness and modifications are recommended where appropriate.
- Ensure the scaffold is inspected and inspection records are available and maintained.

Things to look out for

Make sure that your scaffolder is not:

- using inferior quality scaffolding.
- mixing components from different scaffolding systems.
- using scaffold components that are defective.

Such practices can place persons at risk. Suppliers, hirers or lessors should be implementing risk control measures to make sure their scaffold is properly erected, maintained, repaired, tested and cleaned. You should also check that the scaffold you intend to use or hire is appropriately registered. Design registration is required for prefabricated scaffolding systems and, as part of the registration process, a competent person must verify that the design complies with the relevant parts of the Australian Standards. Where a scaffolding system is altered, the altered system must be design registered with WorkCover NSW.

Where can I get further information?

You need to ensure that scaffolding and the process for erecting, altering and dismantling it complies with the following Australian Standards:

- AS 1576 Scaffolding
- AS 1577 Scaffold planks
- AS/NZS 4576 Guidelines for scaffolding.

You can also download a copy of the NSW Industry Safety Standard for Erecting, Altering and Dismantling Scaffolding – Part 1: Pre-fabricated Steel Modular Scaffolding from:
www.workcover.nsw.gov.au

HIA's Technical Advisers can give you some guidance on these standards and help you understand your OHS obligations. ***For more information call the HIA Member Hotline on 1300 650 620***

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