

By Chris Seaman, Jr.

The job needs to be done quickly, time is money, but most importantly, the company can't afford another accident ... so, what are the safest and best tools for the job?

More often than not, most companies choose the quick and easy way and blow caution to the wind. But as time goes by, and more and more businesses come to learn the true costs involved in an injury, new and best practices for safety come into play. That is why more and more businesses have wisely chosen to eliminate or greatly reduce the use of ladders for low-level jobs. Many have chosen to take the time and spend the money to set up scaffolding or use small work platforms.

The following are the top 10 reasons to use low-level scaffolding:

- 1. Safety.** Ladders are structurally unsafe. The margin for error is so small most users sooner or later cross the line. It is one of the most common causes for injuries in the work place and at home. Many people choose to lean out and try to stretch just a little further UNTIL ... the ladder tips over and the person gets hurt. They didn't want to take the time to set up scaffolding; they didn't want to take the time and get down and move the ladder. The ladder is often not on good footing or it is on a slick or wet floor.
- 2. Money.** Safety is first; remember that choices affect future earnings. One accident will cost not just in direct costs involved in the injury like medical care and injury pay, but also in indirect cost such as getting a replacement for the injured employee—time and productivity are also affected. A little prudence today will save a company more tomorrow.
- 3. Time.** Who has the time to put up scaffold for every small or big job? Why use traditional scaffold when there is new modern scaffold? Some scaffolding has been greatly improved to save time and effort on transporting, storage, and setup. With scaffolding, once it is set up, workers can get more work completed than when using a ladder.
- 4. Comfort.** Scaffolding provides the ability to walk around at the height needed for the given task. When working off of a ladder, pay attention to posture. Ergonomic professionals hate ladders, because of how it puts stress on bent legs and the lower back. Imagine the damage that can be caused if day after day, year after year, a tool

is used that will stress the body. Most everyone is more comfortable working on scaffolding.

- 5. Railing.** Ladders generally do not have railings. With traditional scaffolding, handrails can be built. With the modern scaffold like the X-Deck, there are a number of choices of modular handrails that are simple and safe.
- 6. Versatility.** Scaffolding has it and ladders do not. The perfect scaffolding can be custom-built with traditional scaffolding. With all types of scaffolding, a worker can bridge over obstructions and work around problem areas.



- 7. Teamwork.** More than one worker can be placed on most all kinds of scaffolding and fit comfortably. Workers can work side-by-side and get the job done in half the amount of time that it would take with one person.

- 8. Variety of choices.** The ladder variety has not changed in more than 2,000 years and people have been getting injured on them for the same 2,000 years. Yes, there might be some articulating ladders, but no matter how it is explained, a ladder is a ladder. Scaffolding provides a plethora of choices to fit specific needs.

- 9. Easy set up.** The problem with traditional scaffold is the lengthy set up and tear down—needing a certified person to set up and inspect the scaffold. If one of the modern types of scaffolding is chosen, then they are as easy to set up as a ladder.

- 10. The X-Deck.** Any time a better, safer practice is created, the company saves money. X-Deck is lightweight, portable, and sets up in seconds. Traditional scaffolding does have its negative points. It is hard to move and set up and it has some safety issues involving the workers climbing up and down the structure. Remember, there are other choices in scaffolding. The X-Deck has been recognized for its excellence by many safety organizations across several industries. It was even nominated for the prestigious TIPS award in 2009 by the Palisades Nuclear Power Plant. The TIPS award is given out for the top practice in safety.

Eliminate unsafe practices and implement the best practice. Get the job done right the first time and always take time to choose the right tool for the job. ■

ABOUT the AUTHOR

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