



ARCA Site Audits rise to Scaffolding Challenges

During the 2021-22 HSE work year, 123 workers and 80 members of the public were killed in work related incidents and the main cause of these were falls from, or objects falling, from height.

Scaffolding consistently ranks as one of the most incident inducing pieces of equipment on construction sites - and continues to cause thousands of injuries and deaths.

Revision 15 of the ARCA site audit form includes some additional questions that focus on the main issues that have been found during site audits.

These include:

Scaf- tag/inspections of scaffolding

Handover/TG20 compliance sheets detail criteria, design, height, maximum load, ties, permitted special features etc for regular inspection and must be followed. Therefore, a copy should be available to the site team to ensure this is properly communicated.

Once scaffolding has been signed off by a qualified scaffolding professional, a competent person should inspect the scaffolding for safety as a minimum every seven days. Scaffolds must also be inspected following events which could affect the safety of the structure, e.g., alterations, adverse weather, or an earthquake.

An employer receiving a report must keep it at the site where the inspection was carried out until the work is completed and then at their office for 3 months.

Guard rails and toe boards

Guard rails should run around the perimeter of the platform to prevent persons falling from the scaffold. The minimum height of a guardrail is 950mm. An intermediate guard-rail or similar means of protection must be positioned so that any gap between it and other means of protection does not exceed 470mm.

Toe-boards must be suitable and sufficient to prevent the fall of any person, or of any material or object, from any place of work.

Ladders

Ladders should be installed at a 75-degree incline. They should extend at least 1m or 3 rungs above the landing platform. External ladders should be no more than 4.7m. Internal ladders should not pass-through multiple levels and should not be positioned directly above another. Ladders should be free from damage and defects, be secure and stable. Ladders must be Class1 industrial only.

These new questions should be communicated to site teams to ensure that they understand the standards required on site.

But what other measures can ARCA members do to ensure the risk from working on scaffold is reduced?

Scaffold Awareness training – This level of training does not make anyone competent

to inspect scaffold as per regulatory guidance. It will give users of scaffold a better understanding of what makes a compliant scaffold structure, and some confidence in checking the safety of any scaffold before and during works.

Compile a basic scaffold check sheet that supervisors can use to check a scaffold before works commence, and if events occur that could affect the safety of the scaffold e.g. adverse weather. Items such as those detailed above are a good start.

Compile a comprehensive toolbox talk to be undertaken when scaffold is in use. This should cover:

Access

- proper access/egress procedures
- ensuring proper use of lifts, ladders or stairs provided
- securing access at the end of shifts to prevent unauthorised access*

Loading

- ensuring scaffold is not overloaded
- correct stacking of any materials to ensure even load and avoid the material falling
- keeping routes clear*

General hazards

- guard rails and toe boards are fitted to any places where people, work equipment or materials might fall
- do not throw materials from scaffold
- do not remove/interfere with any part of scaffold
- ensure it is not used until complete and signed off by a competent person or a competent person has inspected it within the last 7 days
- if any issues or defects are highlighted do not use scaffold until a competent person has rectified any issues
- if fall prevention is required, all users must be trained and competent to use it and it must be used.*

*These are not an exhaustive lists.

For further guidance, contact the ARCA team.