

What Makes a Platform Safe?

Falls from heights can lead to serious injuries. Extra care must be taken to select, install and inspect materials used as work platforms.

Many times, workers are found substituting incorrect materials and installing them in a scaffolding system. This could have many causes, ranging from a lack of proper material on site, rushing the job, inattention or lack of training and information.

Several items must be taken into consideration when selecting working platforms.

Some key points to remember:

- Best practice is to use material designed or manufactured for worker support.
- Inspect scaffold planks and platforms before each use.
- Ensure scaffold planks are secured against any movement, including uplift.

Measurements

Another common question with planks and platforms relates to width requirements. The answer differs depending on the use of the scaffold.



Work platforms used on a light-duty scaffold can be much different from those used in a rolling tower, depending on the situation. It is always best practice to consult the *Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Regulations* and your company's policies, practices and procedures for accurate information.



Legislation

According to section 12-7(1) of the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2020*, an employer or contractor shall ensure that scaffold planks:

- a) are inspected by a competent worker to ensure that the scaffold planks are free of defects before the planks are incorporated in a scaffold;
- b) subject to subsections (2) and (4), are of 38 x 240 millimetre, number 1 structural grade spruce lumber or material of equivalent or greater strength;
- c) are the same thickness as adjoining planks;
- d) are laid tightly side by side with adjoining planks to cover the full width of the platform;
- e) are secured to prevent accidental or inadvertent movement in any direction;
- f) where wooden, do not span more than three metres between vertical supports on a light-duty scaffold or 2.1 metres between vertical supports on a heavy-duty scaffold;
- g) where metal or manufactured laminate, do not have a span between vertical supports greater than the span recommended by the manufacturer;
- h) do not extend less than 150 millimetres or more than 300 millimetres beyond the bearers.

