

Temporary Worker Struck by Falling Scaffold Plank

A temporary worker was assigned to a multi-employer commercial building project. He was inexperienced and new to the site.

Another employer on site utilized mast climbing scaffolding systems to allow masonry workers to lay brick on the sides of the building.

The temporary worker was tasked with cutting 15 to 20 feet of waterproofing to install flashing on the building. His supervisor knew the masonry workers were on the scaffold, but they were not working directly above him. The masonry workers were unaware of the temporary worker below them.

One of the masonry workers on the scaffold pulled a plank in preparation to move the scaffold. A scaffold plank is a thick piece of wood that creates a walking surface. The plank was approximately 18 inches wide and 8 feet long.

The plank slipped out of the masonry worker's hand from four stories up. It hit the wall and then hit the bracket of the scaffold before hitting the temporary worker below on the head.

Even though the temporary worker was wearing his hard hat, he suffered a concussion with loss of consciousness. The 10 to 12 centimeter laceration on the back of his scalp needed surgery to repair. He spent eight months off work before being released to modified duty.

What do you think went wrong?

In the space below, list some of the factors that you think could have contributed to this incident.

Then, flip the page over for contributing factors and safety recommendations and requirements.



Photo 1: Area where the incident occurred. The scaffold was raised to the fourth story when the plank fell.



Photo 2: Example of a plank similar to the one that fell and struck the worker, injuring him.



Photo 3: The worker was cutting waterproofing material when he was struck by the falling plank.

Reporting: Employers are required to contact DOSH within 8 hours of a workplace fatality or in-patient hospitalization of any employee and within 24 hours of a non-hospitalized amputation or loss of an eye of any employee. See [WAC 296-27-031](#).

Contributing Factors

The **hazard-creating employer** did not make sure protection from falling objects was in place before the crew started working on the scaffold. The crew did not make sure danger tape was secured around the scaffold before starting work. The danger tape set up days before was laying on the ground.

The **host employer** of the temporary worker also did not make sure that adequate protection from falling objects from the scaffold was provided. The temporary worker was sent to work in an area where falling object hazards were present.

Lack of communication. The temporary worker and his supervisor did not tell the masonry workers that they needed to work below the scaffold. The crew on the scaffold did not know anyone was working below them.

Recommendations

Restrict access around scaffold. Use red danger tape and affix “Do Not Enter” signs on the danger tape with contact information for others who may need permission to enter the restricted access area. Never enter danger tape that is not yours.

Training. Train new and temporary workers to identify and mitigate potential falling object hazards in their work area.

Plan for safety. Conduct joint pre-shift safety meetings with all crews working in the area to communicate what hazards may be present throughout the day.

Requirements

- Employers must protect employees from being struck by tools, materials, or equipment falling from a scaffold by doing one or more of the following: See [WAC 296-874-20066\(1\)](#)
 - Use a barricade to keep employees out of the area where falling objects could be a hazard.
 - Install a toeboard along the edge of the platform anywhere an object could fall on an employee below.
 - Install paneling or screening that covers from the top of the guardrail to the toeboard.
 - Install a guardrail system with openings small enough to keep potential objects from falling through.
 - Erect a canopy structure, debris net, or catch platform over employees.
- All employees must wear a hard hat on any construction site whenever there is a potential exposure to danger of falling objects to persons working or occupying the area. See [WAC 296-155-205\(3\)](#)

Resources

- Chapter 296-874 WAC: Scaffolds—<https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=296-874>
- Chapter 296-155 WAC: Safety Standards for Construction—<https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=296-155>
- Protecting Temporary Workers, HB 1206—<http://lawfilesextra.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2021-22/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/1206-S.SL.pdf#page=1>

Safety Training Sign-In (Print Name Legibly) Date: _____

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