

Worker Hospitalized After Fall from Mobile Scaffold

An experienced carpenter was standing on a mobile scaffold in a small mechanical room. He was sealing up insulation around a vent pipe in the ceiling. The 5-foot by 3-foot scaffold was raised to its maximum height of approximately six feet. The caster wheels on the scaffold were not locked.

On the floor was the 12-inch square hole of a steam blow-off pit that was part of the new construction. The open hole was covered only by a 18 by 20-inch piece of unsecured 1/2-inch thick plywood.

The carpenter needed to move the scaffold to reach another area. While still standing on top of the platform, he pushed on the wall to roll the scaffold where he needed to go.

As the scaffold moved, its wheel pushed the plywood cover off of the floor hole and rolled into it, causing the scaffold to tip over.

The carpenter jumped off of the high side of the scaffold, away from the direction it was tipping. He fell and landed on the concrete floor.

He suffered several broken ribs, neck sprain and a collapsed lung.

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: Six-foot mobile scaffold set up in the small mechanical room. The room's door is to the right of the scaffold.



Photo 2: Unsecured plywood cover over the open floor hole.

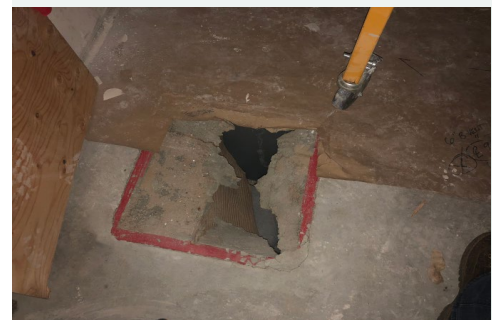


Photo 3: The scaffold's wheel pushed the unsecured cover off of the hole and rolled in, causing scaffold to tip.

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 open hole in the floor was covered with an unsecured piece of plywood.

The wheels on the mobile scaffold were not locked while the worker was working from it.

The worker was moving the scaffold while on it, and did not notice that the scaffold wheel was pushing the unsecured hole cover.

Recommendations

Plan for safety. During pre-shift meetings, discuss existing hazards or worksite changes that create a new hazard for maneuvering scaffolds safely. Update the Job Hazard Analysis with changes.

Cover and mark holes. Cover and secure all open holes with sturdy material. Mark the outside of the cover with the word 'HOLE' to notify others in the area they are stepping on a hole cover.

Position scaffolds safely. Avoid moving mobile scaffolds while workers are on them—get off and reposition in the needed location. Keep wheels locked while workers are on scaffolds.

Requirements

- Employers must guard holes into which an employee can trip, step into, or step through by a cover of standard strength and construction. See [WAC 296-880-10010\(2\)](#).
- Employers must make sure a scaffold is not moved with employees riding on it unless the surface on which the scaffold is being moved is free of pits, holes, and obstruction. See [WAC 296-874-40012\(6\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#).
- Manual force to move the scaffold must be as close to the base as practicable. See [WAC 296-874-40012\(2\)\(a\)](#).
- Employers must make sure mobile scaffold wheels and casters are locked, or equivalent means are used, to prevent movement when the scaffold is being used. See [WAC 296-874-40006\(5\)\(b\)](#).
- Employers must have a qualified person train each employee who works on a scaffold to a) recognize the hazards associated with the type of scaffold they are using, and b) understand the procedures to control or minimize the hazards. See [WAC 296-874-20072\(1\)](#).

Resources

- Chapter 296-874 WAC: Scaffolds—<https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=296-874>
- Chapter 296-880 WAC: Unified Safety Standards for Fall Protection—<https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=296-880>
- OSHA eTools: Supported Scaffolds—<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/scaffolding/supported/>

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

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