



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY & HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

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Scaffold Access

Climbing the structural cross-braces of a scaffold is *unsafe*, and *specifically forbidden* by federal standards. However, OSHA permits direct access from another scaffold, structure, or personnel hoist.

If such access is not possible, portable ladders, hook-on ladders, attachable ladders, stair towers, stairway-type ladders, ramps, walkways, or built-in ladders must be used, under the following regulations:



Portable, Hook-on, and Attachable Ladders

- Must be positioned so as not to tip the scaffold.

Hook-on and Attachable Ladders

- Must be specifically designed for the type of scaffold with which they are used.
- Must have their lowest rung no more than 24 inches above the level on which the scaffold is supported.
- When used on a supported scaffold more than 35 feet high, must have rest platforms at 35-foot maximum intervals.
- Must have a maximum rung length of 11½ inches, and a maximum space between rungs of 16¾ inches.

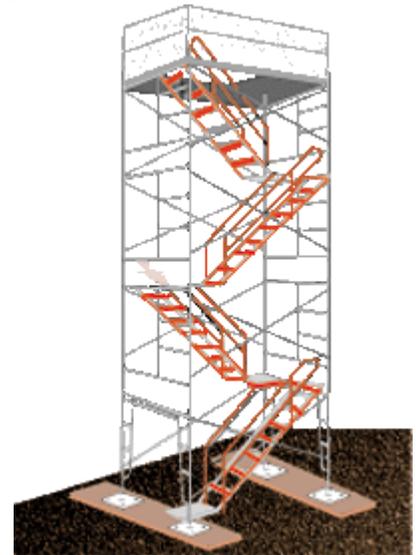


Stairway-type Ladders

- Must have their bottom step no more than 24 inches above the level on which the scaffold is supported.
- Must have rest platforms at 12-foot maximum intervals.
- Must have a minimum step width of 16 inches, except that mobile stairway-type ladders shall have a minimum step width of 11½ inches.
- Must have slip-resistant treads on all steps and landings.

Stair Towers

- Must have their bottom step no more than 24 inches above the level on which the scaffold is supported.
- Must have a stair-rail, consisting of a top-rail and a mid-rail, on each side.
 - The top-rail of each stair-rail must also be capable of serving as a handrail, unless a separate handrail is provided.
 - Stair-rails and handrails must be designed and constructed to prevent punctures, lacerations, snagged clothing, and projection.
 - Handrails, and top-rails used as handrails, must be at least 3 inches from other objects.
 - Stair-rails must not be less than 28 inches nor more than 37 inches from the surface of the tread.
- Must be at least 18 inches wide between stair-rails, and have a landing platform at least 18 inches wide by at least 18 inches long at each level.
- Must have slip-resistant surfaces on all treads and landings.
- Must be installed between 40 degrees and 60 degrees from the horizontal.
- Must have uniform riser height, within ¼ inch, for each flight of stairs, except for the top and bottom steps of the *entire system*.
- Must have uniform tread depth, within ¼ inch, for each flight of stairs.



Built-in Scaffold Ladders

- Must be specifically designed and constructed for use as ladder rungs.
- Must have a rung length of at least 8 inches.
- Must not be used as work platforms when rungs are less than 11½ inches, unless each employee uses [fall protection](#) or a positioning device [[29 CFR 1926.502\(e\)](#)].
- Must be uniformly spaced within each frame section.
- Must have rest platforms at 35-foot maximum intervals on all supported scaffolds more than 35 feet high.
- Must have a maximum space between rungs of 16¾ inches.

Steps and rungs of ladders and stairways must line up vertically with each other between rest platforms.

Ramps and Walkways

- Must have [guardrails](#) which comply with [[29 CFR 1926.502\(b\)](#)] 1926 Subpart M if more than 6 feet above lower levels.

- Must have a slope of no more than 1 vertical to 3 horizontal degrees (20 degrees above the horizontal).
- Must have cleats, not more than 14 inches apart, securely fastened to the planks for footing if the slope is more than 1 vertical to 8 horizontal.

Direct Access

- Direct access to or from another surface shall only be used when the scaffold is not more than 14 inches horizontally and 24 inches vertically from the other surface.



Additional Information:

- [29 CFR 1926 Subpart L](#), Scaffolds. OSHA Standard.
 - [1926.451](#), General requirements
 - [1926.451\(e\)](#), Access
- [Worker Deaths by Falls: A Summary of Surveillance Findings and Investigative Case Reports](#). US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Publication 2000-116, (2000, September).