Scaffolding Safety – USACE EM 385-1-1 Compliant. Course Reference Handout

This reference guide summarizes key safety principles, practices, and regulatory requirements related to scaffolding on construction sites, based on Chapter 22 of the EM 385-1-1 manual. It is intended as a supplemental handout for learners who complete the course.

What is Scaffolding Safety?

Scaffolding Safety refers to the prevention of falls, collapses, and other hazards related to the erection, use, and dismantling of scaffolds. According to EM 385-1-1, scaffold-related incidents are a leading cause of injury and death in construction. The goal is to ensure scaffolds are designed, maintained, and used properly, with competent supervision and training.

Key Roles and Responsibilities

Competent Person: Required to inspect scaffolding daily and supervise erection, movement, alteration, and dismantling. Must identify hazards and take corrective measures.

Qualified Person: Responsible for design and load calculations of scaffolds.

Scaffold Users: Must be trained in the nature of fall hazards and how to mitigate them.

General Scaffold Requirements

Scaffolds must be capable of supporting at least 4 times the maximum intended load.

Scaffold components must be compatible and free from corrosion, damage, or deterioration.

Base plates and mud sills are required to ensure a stable foundation.

Platforms must be fully planked with no more than a 1-inch gap.

Guardrails, Midrails, and toe boards are mandatory at heights of 6 feet or more.

Fall Protection Requirements

Workers on scaffolds more than 6 feet above a lower level must be protected by guardrails or personal fall arrest systems.

When guardrails are not possible, a personal fall arrest system is required, properly anchored and maintained. Access ladders or stairways must be provided.

Inspection & Maintenance

Scaffolds must be inspected before each shift and after any event that could affect stability.

Damaged or weakened scaffolds must be repaired or replaced before use.

Tagging systems (e.g., green/yellow/red) should be used to indicate scaffold status.

Types of Scaffolds Covered

Supported Scaffolds: Built from the ground up using frames and platforms.

Suspended Scaffolds: Hung from above using ropes or other support systems.

Rolling Scaffolds: Portable, mobile versions used indoors or on flat surfaces.

Each type has unique structural requirements and hazard controls.

Prohibited Practices

Using makeshift components or incompatible parts.

Standing on guardrails.

Overloading scaffolds.

Erecting or dismantling without supervision from a Competent Person.

Training Requirements

Per EM 385-1-1: Scaffold users must be trained on types of scaffolds, fall hazards, and safe usage.

Erectors and dismantlers require additional training from a Qualified Person.

Summary of EM 385-1-1 Requirements (Chapter 22)

- All scaffolds must be erected, moved, and dismantled under supervision.
- Daily inspections are mandatory.
- Fall protection is non-negotiable.
- Training is required and must be documented.
- Scaffolds must be designed for expected loads.

Conclusion

Scaffolding Safety isn't just about compliance—it's about protecting lives. When properly planned, supervised, and maintained, scaffolds provide a safe and effective means to

perform elevated work. EM 385-1-1 offers a clear framework that, when followed, drastically reduces the risk of incident and injury.

Course Duration: 1 Hour IACET CEUs Awarded: 0.1