

# SAFETY SHOOTER



by Joe Vierra of  
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## Scaffolding Is Serious Business

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, 2.3 million construction workers work on scaffolding on a frequent basis. Every year, approximately 4500 injuries and 50 deaths occur in scaffold-related accidents with an estimated \$90 million in lost workdays in addition to the medical, workers compensation, and other costs resulting from these incidents.

Erecting scaffolding is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle. All the pieces must fit together. Scaffold safety begins in the assembly process. Always be sure to inspect the scaffold for bent or damaged frames, cross braces, and straight braces prior to starting assembly. At no time shall welds be used on the frames. It is very important that the scaffold is clean and free of hardened concrete. The planks must be clean and checked for cracks or excessive wear. Never erect a scaffold that has to be tie-wired together to stay in place. Make sure the scaffold is leveled, straight, stable, and fully planked on each level.

Dismantling scaffolding is just as important as setting it up. Take a few minutes to clean scaffolding of all debris. Always take the scaffold down one piece at a time, keeping the scaffold from bending and the seams from breaking. When traveling with a scaffold from job to job it is a good practice to regularly unload all the scaffolding from each crew truck and check for damage, cracks, and seams. Be sure there is a complete set of the required scaffold pieces to make scaffold setup easy and safe. Always have additional scaffolding to replace any damaged pieces. By having this additional scaffolding available, a safe scaffold can be erected—a better option than taking a chance on damaged or suspect pieces that can result in injuries or fatalities.

Document your scaffolding procedures and inspections. Retain these inspection reports as you would other important company documents. In the event of an accident, the company can demonstrate its efforts to create a safe work site.

A properly erected scaffold will reduce your labor costs while providing a safe working environment for everyone on the job. Don't take unnecessary chances with scaffolding—too many people count on it.

*Joe Vierra is employed by Concrete Structures, San Jose, California. He has been with the firm for over 15 years and has worked extensively in the field as a nozzleman and foreman. Vierra is currently a project manager actively bidding and managing shotcrete construction projects.*



Remember—safety is not a “sometimes” thing. Safety is an “all the time” thing. June 22-28 is National Workplace Safety Week. Examine your company’s safety plans and policies and dedicate this week to making your company a truly safe place to work. And be sure to communicate your commitment to safety to all employees. Working safely is not just good business, it is the right thing to do.