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Scaffold INDUSTRY

ELEVATING THE STANDARD OF PRACTICE IN THE SCAFFOLD AND ACCESS INDUSTRY

Scaffold Safety Signals

Capitalize on the colors associated with safe passage—red, yellow and green—in tagging scaffolds for safe use



Color-Coded Confidence

With a clearly noticeable tag, scaffold users can quickly identify the condition of the scaffolding system:

- Green = Safe for use
- Yellow = Caution: Potential or unusual hazard
- Red = Unsafe for use



SCAFFOLD SAFETY SIGNALS

CAPITALIZE ON THE COLORS ASSOCIATED WITH SAFE PASSAGE—RED, YELLOW AND GREEN—IN TAGGING SCAFFOLDS FOR SAFE USE

By Wendy Larison, Hardy Roloff and Dave Johnson

The Scaffold Industry Association (SIA) promotes safety for every worker involved with scaffold and access systems. “Tagging” scaffolds is a critical aspect of this effort. Tagging involves attaching a label to the equipment to let users know about any dangers or precautions that exist on a specific scaffold. While the government does not federally mandate tagging, the practice can make the difference between a safe jobsite and one fraught with unknown hazards.

The following “rules” detail practical and commonsense tagging procedures. Whether you are erecting or using a scaffold, incorporating these suggested directives into your inventory will keep crews safer and at less risk.

Rule 1. Look for entry-point tags. Every scaffold should bear a color-coded tag at each point of entry that indicates its status and condition. The status tags are:

- **Green.** This tag identifies the scaffold as “Safe for Use.” Those words or similar verbiage give users the go-ahead to put that scaffold into service.

Tagging Alternatives

Tags are available in a variety of options. Some of the most common are:

- **Cardstock tags.** Competent-person inspectors write directly on these disposable tags before attaching them via cord, string or wire loop to a scaffold's entry points. When a scaffold requires a new tag, the inspector removes and discards the original tag, replacing it with a new one. Some of these options come with self-laminating covers to protect ink from smudging or washing off in inclement weather.
- **Vinyl tags.** Inspectors fill these tags out using permanent markers, then use nylon ties to attach the one-time-use tags to scaffold entry points.
- **Plastic tag-holder kits.** Rigid plastic holders attach semi-permanently to a scaffold's entry points. An inspector fills out the appropriate tag and then inserts it into the holder. He or she can replace the multi-use, weatherproof tags by sliding one out and sliding in a new one.
- **Wrap tags.** Similar to airline luggage tags, these tags don't require ties for attaching to a scaffold. Instead, self-adhesive ends wrap around the scaffold and attach to one another to secure the tag in place.
- **Boxed tag dispensers.** These quick-use tags dispense from a box and tear off individually along a perforated edge. Inspectors fill out the tags and attach using wire, string or plastic ties.



- **Yellow.** A golden-hued ticket warns users about possible danger and includes verbiage such as, "Caution: Potential or Unusual Hazard." Yellow tags should list any modifications made to the scaffold and the name of the individual responsible for those changes. The tag also should identify the preventive measures users should take to diminish their risk.
- **Red.** Scarlet-colored tags identify hazardous equipment and include language along the



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lines of "Unsafe for Use" to warn about perilous risks associated with that scaffold's operation. Red tags should list the project number, the name of the inspector, the date of the inspection and the specific reason for the red tag, such as "Erection in progress," "Repairs necessary," "Dismantling in progress," etc.

Rule 2. Inspect tags for expired-use dates. A scaffold erected but not immediately put into service (or, per Canadian law, not used for more than 21 consecutive calendar days) should bear a red tag at each point of entry until a competent person has inspected and tagged it for use.

Rule 3. Ensure a competent person has inspected the scaffold. A competent person should inspect and tag a scaffold:

- Before anyone uses it for the first time.
- Before each work shift.
- Whenever someone has structurally altered it in some way that could result in it becoming unsafe.

In Canada, such inspections should occur at intervals not exceeding more than 21 calendar days when work is performed or materials are stored on the scaffold, or when a scaffold has not been used or inspected for 21 calendar days.



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Rule 4. Identify that tags include all details. A scaffold tag should include several aspects of inspection. Do not use a scaffold if the tag omits any of the following details:

- The duty rating of the scaffold (light duty, medium duty, heavy duty or otherwise).
- The date of the scaffold's last inspection.
- The name of the competent person who last inspected the scaffold.

- Any precautions users should take while working on the scaffold.
- The expiration date of the tag.

Rule 5. Alert yourself to signs of danger involving tags. Don't use a scaffold if it has:

- A red tag.
- A green or yellow tag that has expired.
- No tag at all.

Rule 6. Allow a competent person access for inspecting and tagging. Even when a scaffold has a red tag or an expired tag, you should allow a competent person access to the scaffold so he/she can inspect it before erection, use or dismantling of the equipment.

These types of rules help develop a culture of safety among crews that work with scaffolds. Though small, a tool such as tagging all scaffolding inventory can go a long way toward developing a safe workplace and minimizing costly personal-injury litigation.

About the authors

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