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Scaffold refers to a specific type of assembly structure, usually temporary in nature, used to support workers and materials while they build or repair a structure. Scaffolding involves sturdy connections of frames and planks by bolts and couplers, which come in many forms, depending on the size and shape of the desired framework of the scaffold. Some different kinds of scaffold include, the independent or birdcage scaffold; the single pole scaffold; the suspended, or swingstage, scaffold; the cantilever scaffold; and the hanging bracket scaffold.

To insure safety, a scaffold should always be assembled in accordance with the designer's instructions and the scaffold plan. Any person doing scaffolding work more than 12 feet (about 3.7 meters) above ground must hold a training and competency certificate, in many cases. It can be hazardous to work upon a scaffold. Apart from the obvious potential for falls, injuries and fatalities can also occur from working too close to power lines, mixing and matching components, scaffold collapse and falling objects.

When selecting a scaffold, the specified building's design, shape, and location should be considered. The scaffold's ability to adapt to the structure's contours should also be taken into account, particularly if a modular scaffold is being considered. Moreover, the purpose for which the scaffold will be used should be considered.

The independent or birdcage scaffold consists of more than two rows of vertical poles, or standards, connected by horizontal pieces, or ledgers and transoms. It is intended for use on one level only, like when working on a ceiling. The single pole scaffold contains a single row of standards, and is completely dependent upon the structure against which it is placed for support.

The suspended or swingstage scaffold can be either raised or lowered, as it has a suspended platform. These types of scaffolds are commonly associated with the types window washers. A cantilever scaffold is one which is attached or supported at one end only.

An engineer should design the hanging bracket scaffold and its means of support. A safe means of access and exit should be provided for persons installing a hanging bracket scaffold. This system may include horizontal components that are supported by floors of buildings or other structures.

There are variations of many of the different kinds of scaffolds. Choosing the appropriate scaffold for the job should be done with care, as a life could depend on it.

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