

MIOSHA Fact Sheet



Scaffold Wind and Weather Protection

Attaching weather protection systems to scaffolds is a typical work practice during the colder months on construction sites in Michigan. Not only do weather protection systems create a more comfortable working environment, but they are also a requisite factor when constructing masonry block walls. Typically, the newly placed masonry units need to be protected from the cold temperatures that are prevalent during the winter months. Keeping the newly placed blocks and mortar at a sufficiently warm temperature allows the mortar to achieve the designed strength that is necessary to ensure structural integrity.

A common practice for maintaining warmer working temperatures is to wrap the scaffold in plastic sheathing, thus creating an enclosure to keep the cold out. While this may be a reasonable and economic method for controlling the atmosphere, it is not without hazards. The stability of the scaffold and structure can be compromised due to the wind, which consequently may expose employees to serious injuries and even death.

Construction Standard [Part 12, Scaffolds and Scaffold Platforms](#) Rule 408.41212(2) states:

Work on or from scaffolds is prohibited during storms or high winds unless a **competent person** has determined that it is safe for employees to be on a scaffold and that the employees are protected by a personal fall arrest system. **Wind screens shall not be used unless the scaffold is secured against the anticipated wind forces imposed.**

It does not take a lot of wind speed to have a significant impact on a scaffold's stability. There have been several instances, including fatalities in Michigan, of scaffolds being overturned due to the wind. This has happened when weather protection had been installed without the proper stability considerations included in the scaffold design.

It is imperative that scaffolds with weather protection systems attached be designed by a person who is **qualified** in this type of scaffold construction and with environmental factors in mind. The **potential** wind load that **could** be imposed on a scaffold must be evaluated and determined before constructing the scaffold. The larger the surface area of wind sheathing being used, the greater effect wind will have on the structural stability of the scaffold. In addition, the **competent** person must inspect the scaffold for deficiencies before each work shift and after any occurrence that affects a scaffold's structural stability.

Employers are encouraged to contact the MIOSHA Construction Safety and Health Division at 517-284-7680 if they have questions regarding jobsite health and safety or compliance issues. The MIOSHA Consultation Education and Training (CET) Division provides training and onsite audit services for residential and commercial builders at the employer's request, free of charge. The CET Division can be contacted directly at www.michigan.gov/cetrca, or at 517-284-7720.



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Construction Safety and Health Division
530 W. Allegan Street • P.O. Box 30645 • Lansing, Michigan 48909-8145
www.michigan.gov/miosha • 517-284-7680
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