TAILGATE
HUMAN-CENTRED HEALTH and SAFETY TRAINING MATERIALS

# TOOLBOX TALK: Scaffold Safety in Winter

Date: _____ Crew / Site: _____

## How to Use This Safety Talk

This is a short, practical conversation guide - not a lecture. Read it in your own words make it personal for your crew by adding site specific examples, something you noticed recently or additions from your Company HS program. You don't need to memorize anything or sound polished - be yourself.

## Opening

Before we get started today, I want to talk about **scaffold use in winter** - and why we don't treat scaffolds the same way we do in warmer conditions. This isn't about questioning anyone's experience. Everyone here knows how to work on scaffolds. If you don't, come see me so we can make sure your training is up to date.

The issue in winter isn't skill - it's conditions.

Scaffolds don't change overnight, but the environment around them does. Snow, ice, wind, and freeze-thaw cycles affect footing, access, stability, and how materials behave on platforms. Those changes don't always look serious at first glance, but they quietly raise the risk.

That's why winter scaffold work needs more attention, not more speed.

## Why This Matters

In winter, small changes add up fast. Ice on a platform can remove traction instantly. Snow can hide missing planks, gaps, or trip hazards. Frozen ground can shift base plates or mud sills as temperatures change. Wind exposure increases the higher we go, and bulky winter clothing affects balance and movement.

Most winter scaffold incidents don't happen because someone ignored the rules. They happen because conditions changed just enough that a normal movement became unsafe. That's why scaffold access, movement, and material handling are higher-risk activities in winter – even on scaffolds we've used many times before.

## What We're Doing Differently Today

Before and during scaffold use today, we're doing a few things on purpose:

- We inspect the scaffold at the start of the shift and again if conditions change
- We clear snow and ice from platforms, stairs, and access points
- We check base plates, mud sills, and ground conditions for movement or frost heave
- We confirm guardrails, toe boards, planks, and braces are complete and secure
- We use proper access - no climbing frames, braces, or cross members
- We slow down movement and material handling on platforms
- We will use these controls to reduce risk *(add site-specific controls- refer to Scaffold Inspection Checklist)*:
    - _____
    - _____
    - _____
    - _____

## What I Expect from You

- If something looks different than it did yesterday - say something.
- If a platform feels slippery, a plank looks shifted, or the scaffold doesn't feel solid, stop and let me know before continuing. That's not overreacting - that's doing your job safely.
- If you see snow or ice building up on access points or platforms, don't step around it. Fix it or report it.

Remember your duty to report hazards to me immediately - including conditions you notice on a scaffold someone else is using. Looking out for scaffold conditions is part of looking out for each other. **If the conditions can't be controlled, the scaffold doesn't get used until they can.**

## Quick Crew Check-In (Optional)

- Has anything changed on the scaffold since this morning?
- Are there any areas where footing, wind, or access might be an issue today?

## TOOLBOX TALK: Winter Scaffold Safety

**Attendance Sheet**

Company/Site: _____

Date: _____ Supervisor Name: _____

Workers in Attendance:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

7 _____

8 _____

9 _____

10 _____

11 _____

12 _____

13 _____

14 _____

15 _____

## Winter Scaffold Safety - OHSA / O. Reg. 213/91 Aligned Control Checklist

Project / Location: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor: _____

| Item | Pass | Fail | Controls/Comments |
|---|---|---|---|
| **GROUND & BASE CONDITIONS** (O. Reg. 213/91 – s. 26, s. 128, s. 135) | | | |
| Ground conditions assessed (frozen, thawing, uneven, icy, soft) | ☐ | ☐ | |
| Scaffold not erected on snow, ice, or unstable ground | ☐ | ☐ | |
| Base plates and mud sills installed and bearing evenly | ☐ | ☐ | |
| Ground protected from frost heave or settlement | ☐ | ☐ | |
| Scaffold base protected from movement or displacement | ☐ | ☐ | |
| **SURFACE & SURROUNDING CONDITIONS** (O. Reg. 213/91 – s. 26, s. 29; OHSA s. 25(2)(h)) | | | |
| Snow, ice, and slush removed from scaffold base area | ☐ | ☐ | |
| Work area around scaffold kept clear and accessible | ☐ | ☐ | |
| Scaffold positioned to avoid vehicle, equipment, or traffic hazards | ☐ | ☐ | |
| Barricades, fencing, or exclusion zones in place where required | ☐ | ☐ | |
| **SCAFFOLD STRUCTURE & COMPONENTS** (O. Reg. 213/91 – s. 125–138) | | | |
| Scaffold erected in accordance with manufacturer's instructions | ☐ | ☐ | |
| All frames, braces, pins, and connections installed correctly | ☐ | ☐ | |
| Guardrails, mid-rails, and toe boards installed where required | ☐ | ☐ | |
| Platforms fully planked, secured, and free of gaps | ☐ | ☐ | |
| Scaffold free from damage and suitable for winter conditions | ☐ | ☐ | |
| **ACCESS & MOVEMENT** (O. Reg. 213/91 – s. 126, s. 127; OHSA s. 28) | | | |
| Safe access provided (stairs, ladder, ramp as designed) | ☐ | ☐ | |
| Access points and stairs cleared of snow and ice | ☐ | ☐ | |
| Workers not climbing frames, braces, or guardrails | ☐ | ☐ | |
| Movement on platforms controlled and deliberate | ☐ | ☐ | |
| Materials handled safely to prevent slips or loss of balance | ☐ | ☐ | |
| **ENVIRONMENTAL & WEATHER CONDITIONS** (OHSA s. 25(2)(h)) | | | |
| Wind conditions assessed for scaffold height and exposure | ☐ | ☐ | |
| Visibility adequate for safe access and work | ☐ | ☐ | |
| No freezing rain or rapidly deteriorating weather | ☐ | ☐ | |
| Scaffold reassessed if conditions change during the shift | ☐ | ☐ | |
| **ADMINISTRATIVE & SUPERVISORY CONTROLS** (OHSA s. 25, s. 27) | | | |
| Workers briefed on winter scaffold hazards | ☐ | ☐ | |
| Expectations set for slower pace and controlled movement | ☐ | ☐ | |
| Workers encouraged to stop work and report unsafe conditions | ☐ | ☐ | |
| Alternative access or work method considered if controls inadequate | ☐ | ☐ | |

## Decision:

☐ Scaffold controls adequate – work may proceed

☐ Scaffold controls inadequate – ladder use delayed or alternative access required

Supervisor Signature: _____ Date of Inspection: _____

Type of Scaffold System: _____

Notes / Additional Controls:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

**Compliance**

This checklist supports due diligence under the Occupational Health and Safety Act and Ontario Regulation 213/91 by documenting winter-specific hazard assessment, implementation of engineering and administrative controls, and active supervisory oversight. Scaffold use is suspended where conditions prevent safe access, stability, or control of fall and slip hazards.

**Final decisions on equipment use, restrictions, or substitutions remain the responsibility of the employer or constructor in accordance with manufacturer instructions and applicable legislation.**