

Investigation Process

What triggers an investigation by the N.C. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Division?

- A worker's death.
- Hospitalization of an employee, an amputation or the loss of an eye.
- The department may also receive information of a fatality or catastrophe from media reports or referrals from other government agencies.

How is the NCDOL OSH Division notified?

- An employer must notify NCDOL within eight hours of any work-related fatality. In-patient hospitalizations of one or more employees, any work-related amputation, and any work-related loss of an eye must be reported within 24 hours.

What will the investigation focus on?

- The investigation will usually be limited to the events surrounding the accident unless observations at the site indicate a broader investigation is needed.

What will happen during the investigation?

- An OSH investigator will go to the accident site and collect physical evidence, including photographs.
- The investigator will interview employees, witnesses and management officials about the accident to determine its cause.
- Any violations of safety and health standards will be noted and citations will be issued.

How long will the investigation take?

- An investigation can take anywhere from a few weeks to six months, depending on the complexity of the accident.

When are investigation results disclosed?

- Citations and penalties, if issued, can be released to the public on the issuance date.
- Other contents of the file cannot be released until the case is closed or final order on citations is rendered.



Photo: NCDOL/Neal O'Briant

Make sure workers wear required personal protective equipment, platforms are fully planked, and there is a guardrail system in place for scaffolding.

The Investigation

OSH investigators will seek to determine several factors, including whether:

- Fall protection was provided for employees on scaffolds higher than 10 feet.
- Load limits for scaffolding were observed.
- Scaffold decks were fully planked.
- Employees kept a safe distance from power lines.
- Employees had safe access to the scaffold.
- Scaffolding was inspected by a "competent" person, someone with the authority to stop work and qualified to recognize hazards.
- Employer developed a training program that helped employees become aware of scaffolding hazards.



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Standards: 29 CFR 1910.28, Scaffolds
29 CFR 1926, Subpart L—Scaffolds

Industry Type: Construction and General Industry

Accident Type: Fall from scaffolding

Statistical Data: Two workplace fatalities involved scaffolds in calendar years 2019 and 2020.

What programs does the Department of Labor have in place to prevent falls from scaffolds?

Construction special emphasis program: Increased training and attention in a dangerous industry.

Free training: Workshops, training and consultation in both English and Spanish.

Publications: Industry guides that discuss safe scaffolding practices.