

# SG41:20

## Long Standing Scaffolding Structures

**NASC**

NATIONAL ACCESS & SCAFFOLDING  
CONFEDERATION

### 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this guidance is to provide guidance on the management of long-standing scaffolding structures. Throughout the industry scaffolds are erected to provide long-term access requirements and often remain in position for many months or even years, for example temporary yard sheds, scaffolding material racking systems, maintenance scaffolds etc.



### 2. WORK ENVIRONMENTS AND ASSOCIATED HAZARDS

Certain components (e.g. timber boards, ladders and rope lashings) tend to deteriorate faster than metal components, depending on several factors including the environment, location, exposure, external influences, abuse, duration and frequency of use.

Main types of workplace hazards that could affect the integrity of scaffolding materials include:

- Biological hazards caused by organisms such as bacteria, fungi and parasites.
- Chemical hazards caused by a solid, liquid, vapour, gas, dust, fume or mist.
- Physical hazards caused by noise, vibration, energy, weather, heat, cold, electricity, radiation and pressure.
- Deterioration to the façade due to anchor ties and chemical ties.

### 3. RISK MANAGEMENT

The NASC recommends scaffolding contractors carry out health and safety risk assessments which involves considering the workplace hazards and implementing suitable control measures to eliminate, reduce or minimise the risk of loss, damage or injury in the workplace. Risk assessments are to be communicated effectively to all employees, contractors and others who may be subjected to potential risk. To further reduce risk, the NASC recommends that the NASC Toolbox Talk suite is utilised to raise employee awareness.

Manual handling causes over a third of all workplace injuries. These include work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) such as pain and injuries to arms, legs and joints, and repetitive strain injuries of various sorts. Employers must reduce the risk of injury to staff by carrying out manual handling risk assessments avoiding those manual handling tasks that could result in injury, where reasonably practicable.

### 4. OVERVIEW OF LOCATION OF SCAFFOLDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURE

The period that a scaffold remains in a safe condition is dependent on many factors. (e.g. the environment, location, exposure, external influences, abuse, duration and frequency of use). Due to the temporary nature of all scaffolding structures, there comes a time when the integrity of all its components (due to corrosion and other types of deterioration) cannot be guaranteed and a decision should be made to fully assess and possibly renovate or dismantle the structure and re-erect with serviceable and recently inspected tubes, fittings and boards etc..

Typical Environment	Assessed Service Period*
Scaffolds situated in harsh environments or regularly subjected to severe weather. (e.g. coast, in open country)	6–12 months
Scaffolds situated outdoors and exposed to moderate weather conditions. (e.g. yards, industrial sites)	12–24 months
Scaffolds situated within buildings, or very sheltered locations etc. (i.e. sheltered & not subject to adverse weather conditions)	24–36 months

\* The timescale indicated may be adjusted also based on the results of the periodic statutory inspections.

### 5. MANAGEMENT OF RISK – RISK BASED DECISION MAKING PROCESS BASED ON SEVERAL FACTORS

**Degradation of Long-Standing Scaffolds** – Whilst severe corrosion of metal components affects load bearing capacity, it may also present unacceptable hazards for the scaffolders when dismantling. This should provide sufficient justification to dismantle the scaffold, before corrosion becomes excessive. When any structure reaches its recommended maximum service period a decision should be made as to whether the structure remains safe to use, or needs to be renovated or dismantled and re-erected. This process should be carried out by means of a formal risk assessment which should be recorded and detail any necessary action to ensure the scaffold's integrity, and the maximum period until the next thorough examination shall take place.

**Scaffold Inspection** – All scaffold structures shall be thoroughly inspected and recorded on the inspection record i.e. scaffold inspection form, Scaffold Register (may be known as F91), electronic inspection software solution etc.

- Any observations, defects etc shall be brought to the attention of the operational teams and client as appropriate to enable remedial action to be planned and taken.
- Other inspection records may include the Handover Certificate or Scaff-Tag, dependent on client requirements.

**Decision to Dismantle a Scaffolding Structure** – The decision to dismantle a structure should always be at the discretion of the competent person undertaking the statutory inspections (i.e. the Scaffolding Inspector).

At any time, if the Inspector is not confident that all elements of the structure are serviceable and free from defects, the inspector shall immediately prohibit access to the structure and where necessary the surrounding area, pending further examination and restoration or dismantling as required.

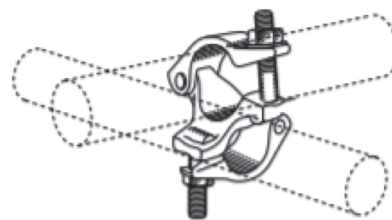
#### **Segregation and Quarantine of Damaged Material**

- Segregate and isolate any component parts that need repair.
- Store damaged components in a clearly marked area until repaired or disposed of to ensure they do not go back into the general stock.
- Discard or destroy damaged parts following appropriate and legal disposal procedures.

## **6. SPANNER CHECKS**

A spanner check is a simple inspection to ensure that the scaffolding coupler(s) is at the appropriate torque and has not become loose over time.

- All long-standing scaffolds should be subject to a sample spanner check every 3 months, to check for security and degradation of the fittings.
- In adverse conditions, i.e. external or vibration conditions, the timescale may be brought forward e.g. to every month or more frequent as deemed necessary by risk assessment.
- Spanner checks shall be recorded on the appropriate inspection record e.g. scaffold inspection form, Scaffold Register (may be known as F91), electronic inspection software solution etc.



*Example Double Coupler*

*Note:* Where scaffolds are not fully boarded/decked, there may be an issue of gaining access to inspect one scaffold. This should be taken into account as per CDM at the planning stage and it may require sections of scaffolding being re-boarded to enable access.

## 7. REFERENCES AND FURTHER GUIDANCE

### Legislation:

Construction (Design Management) Regulations 2015.  
Work at Height Regulations 2005.

### NASC Guidance (Not exhaustive):

SG4 Preventing Falls in Scaffolding Operations.  
SG6 Manual Handling in the Scaffolding Industry.  
SG7 Risk Assessments & Method Statements RAMS.  
SG20 Consultation & Participation with the Workforce  
SG25 Access and Egress from Scaffolds via Ladders & Stair Towers etc.  
SG35 Guidance on the Handover of Scaffold Structures.  
NASC Toolbox Talks Suite

*Whilst every effort has been made to provide reliable and accurate information, we would welcome any corrections to information provided by the author which may not be entirely accurate, therefore and for this reason, the NASC or indeed the author cannot accept any responsibility for any misinformation posted.*



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