

Swingstages: Number of hoists vs. Number of operators

Over the years, the following question has been posed; “How many operators are required on a suspended scaffold?”

The regulatory agencies in USA and Canada are not specific, but each hoist should have an operator for the following reasons.

1. A hoist is tested and classified by Underwriters Laboratories with a control that is either a direct control on the body of the hoist or a pendant control. UL does not recognize or test central controls that operate more than one hoist unless it is a special site-specific project, which will require a control designed by a qualified person. Central controls require selector switches so that one hoist or another can operate singly to level a platform. UL would have to investigate the compatibility of this switch as well as check the weather seals of all accessories added to the hoist. ANSI A10.8 states that each hoist shall have its own controls. (Reference A10.8 paragraph 6.3.7.1) Check all current codes.
2. It is good practice to be within arm’s reach of the hoist. The operator needs to monitor the hoist while it is working. The operator must watch the wire rope as it passes through the hoist. The operator must listen for abnormal noise. The operator must check that the hoist is not overheating. The operator must monitor the secondary brake.
3. The operator must adjust the rope grab unless it is automatic. Automatic rope grabs usually have a short lanyard to work hands free. Swingstage users usually have semi-automatic grabs that require adjustment by hand. One hand operates one hoist, and the other hand moves the grab. Operating 2 hoists requires 3 hands.
4. If one operator alternately operates one hoist and then the other, the platform will not be level. This is a hazard. Slipping or loss of material from the platform might occur. (Reference A10.8 paragraph 6.1.11) This could also cause side loading on your rigging.
5. In case of medical problems or injury there is no one to assist the incapacitated worker.

All of the above should make it obvious why it is recommended each hoist should have its own operator. It is good safe practice!

This Technical Bulletin was prepared by members of the Scaffold & Access Industry Association SSFI Committee.

SSFI is a committee comprising manufacturers of shoring, scaffolding, forming, and suspended scaffolding. The committee focuses on engineering and safety aspects of scope products.

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