

## It's As Good As ... -- Comparison Shopping

Determining whether one scaffold product is comparable or equal to another company's similar product can be a daunting experience since many products look alike. When choosing the best product for your requirements, consider the following:

1. Manufacturer Reputation:
  - Find out about the manufacturer by asking other customers, researching, going to web sites, etc.
  - Verify their membership and activism in industry trade and professional associations.
  - Be careful to distinguish between rumor and fact.
  
2. Manufacturer Qualifications: Ask about the following:
  - product knowledge
  - manufacturing facilities
  - employee skills, training and experience
  - use of independent labs
  - insurance
  - availability of test results.
  - manufacturing knowledge
  
3. Insurance:
  - Does the manufacturer have insurance coverage that reflects the potential exposure?
  - Does the insurance apply in the country or location of use?
  - What is the quality rating of the carrier? Do endorsements limit coverage?

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.

This bulletin does not purport to be all-inclusive nor to supplant or replace other additional safety and precautionary measures to cover usual or unusual conditions. If this bulletin conflicts in any way with a state, local, federal, or other government statute or regulation, said statute or regulation shall supersede this bulletin and it shall be the responsibility of each user to comply therewith. This bulletin has been developed as an aid to users of various types of scaffolding equipment. The Scaffold & Access Industry Association or their SSFI Committee members are not responsible for the use of this bulletin.

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4. Technical Support: Does the manufacturer have the following:

- product test data
- engineering support
- design/layout support
- knowledgeable employees on staff to answer questions?
- ability to travel to support its products.

5. Manufacturing Processes:

- What are the quality controls, manufacturing tolerances, and material controls? For example, are the tolerances used in the manufacturing process comparable to another manufacturer?
- Is the steel used the same strength, consistency, and quality as another manufacturer? What is the source of the material?
- Where is the manufacturing plant located? (government regulation or supply/support issues may require consideration)
- Are the standards and guidelines being incorporated into the manufacturing process comparable to another manufacturer? If applicable (for example, scaffold hoists), is the product listed by UL or a comparable recognized test lab?

6. Paint/Finish:

- For painted products, what is the painting method? For example, is it powder coated or dipped?
- If galvanized, is the material comparable in quality and thickness to other manufacturers?
- Is lead or any other hazardous material used in the paint / finish process? If so, buyer may be held responsible.

7. Marketing: Does the manufacturer support its customers through advertising, training, membership in trade organizations, brochures, and other printed material?

8. SSFI Membership:

- Does the manufacturer demonstrate commitment to the industry by belonging to the Scaffolding, Shoring & Forming Institute?
- Does the manufacturer test and rate its products to ANSI and SSFI standards? Verify by asking manufacturer.

These guidelines are intended to assist you in conducting an objective comparison between manufacturers. You should determine which attributes are important to your specific situation.

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