

The Difference Between Shoring and Scaffolding

Shoring is not scaffolding, and scaffolding is not shoring! The difference is in the use. The American National Standards Institute describes scaffolding as “a temporary elevated or suspended work unit and its supporting structure used for supporting worker(s) or materials, or both,” while the same agency describes shoring as “The vertical supporting members in a formwork system.”

To further clarify the difference, ask the question: “What is this deck being used for?” Is the deck (platform) going to be used so workers can stand on it while doing work to something else, such as a ceiling, or is the deck there primarily as part of the formwork for a cast in place concrete slab? It is incorrectly assumed that since the worker is standing on the deck, for example installing reinforcing steel for a concrete floor, it must be a scaffold and therefore the scaffold standards apply. The primary function of the system determines its classification. In other words, if the deck is part of the formwork, it is not scaffolding in spite of the fact that people are standing on that deck.

It is important to determine the primary use of the system so the applicable standards can be implemented. The significant differences include:

1. The safety factor: For scaffolding the factor is 4, and for shoring it ranges from 2 to 4;
2. Fall protection requirements for scaffolding are addressed in Subpart L of the Federal OSHA standards while fall protection requirements for shoring are addressed in Subpart M of the Federal OSHA standards.
3. Manufacturers’ guidelines for the use of each type of equipment must be followed.

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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Some points to consider when determining whether a particular system is scaffolding, or shoring include:

1. It is not the common name of the equipment that determines the use: a scaffold frame can be used as a shoring component and a shoring frame can be used as a scaffold component.
2. A shoring tower that is being used to temporarily support plank for erectors who are constructing a shoring system is a scaffold platform and must comply with the scaffold standards.
3. The safety factor does not determine if the deck is scaffolding or shoring.

Although scaffolding is not shoring and shoring is not scaffolding, remember that each system requires proper fall protection, access, and strength. For further information, consult the latest editions of the following ANSI and OSHA standards:

- ANSI A10.8
- 29CFR1926, Subpart M (OSHA fall protection standards)
- 29CFR1926, Subpart L (OSHA scaffold standards)
- ANSI A10.9
- 29CFR1926, Subpart Q (OSHA concrete standards)

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