



## June 19 — What's Below You?

<p><b>While moving scaffolding on the 3rd floor lots of rust and debris falling down through grating. Contractors below working on scaffolding.</b></p>	<p><b>Told contractors to put up danger tape and placards while removing scaffolding and let people know down below.</b></p>
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It's easy to focus on the work right in front of us. The tools we're using. The materials we're moving. The task we're trying to finish.

But sometimes the greatest hazard isn't where we're standing—it's where someone else is.

While moving scaffolding on the third floor of Building 25, an employee observed rust, debris, and other materials falling through the grating to the levels below. Contractors were actively working on scaffolding beneath the area where the material was falling.

Recognizing the risk, the employee instructed the contractors to install danger tape and warning placards around the work area and ensure people below were aware of the overhead work taking place.

This situation highlights a hazard that is often overlooked during elevated work activities. Employees working above may have a clear view of what they're doing, but they don't always see who is below them. Small pieces of rust, debris, tools, bolts, or materials may not seem significant when they fall, but even lightweight objects can cause serious injuries when dropped from elevation.

One of the challenges with overhead work is that the hazard is often separated from the task itself. The crew moving scaffolding may be focused on their immediate work and not realize how their actions are affecting workers several levels below. That's why communication, barricades, and exclusion zones are critical controls whenever overhead work is taking place.

In this case, the employee recognized that the people most at risk weren't the ones moving the scaffolding—they were the workers below who may not have been aware of the danger above them.

### Hazards

- Struck by hazards
- Falling objects
- Head and face injuries
- Line of fire exposure
- Inadequate barricading
- Lack of communication between work groups

### Words of Wisdom

When working at elevation, always think beyond your immediate work area. The question isn't just "What could happen here?" It's also "Who could be affected below me?"

### Pause and Think

- What materials or tools in your work area could become falling object hazards?
- How do you ensure employees below are protected during overhead work?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to recognize hazards affecting other work groups?
- What controls should be in place before overhead work begins?
- How can communication help prevent line-of-fire incidents?

### Closing Thought

Before starting work above ground level, take a moment to look down. Someone else's safety may depend on it.