



March 18 — Half a Barricade Is No Barricade

An employee from another company climbed onto a scaffold displaying a yellow tag and was not wearing a harness.

I reminded him that the scaffold had a yellow tag on it and reminded him that he needed his harness before going up. Also reminded him of the dangers of falling from that height.

An employee climbed onto a scaffold that was marked with a yellow tag and was not wearing fall protection. The scaffold was accessible. It looked usable. The task likely felt routine.

Yellow means caution not permission. Tags communicate status. Read them. If protection isn't confirmed, don't climb.

But yellow tags are not decoration. A yellow scaffold tag indicates caution incomplete setup, modification, or conditions requiring review before use. It is a visible signal that something is not fully verified. Climbing onto it without confirming its status removes the inspection layer that protects everyone who uses it.

Fall protection is not based on familiarity. When guardrails, decking, or tie-ins are not confirmed, a harness becomes the last line of defense. This wasn't about not knowing scaffolds require protection. It was about stepping past a visible warning.

And most falls begin with one step taken too casually.

Hazards

- Fall from height
- Head injury
- Fractured wrist or ankle
- Spinal injury
- Scaffold instability
- Falling object hazard

Stats

- Falls remain one of the leading causes of serious workplace injury and fatality.
- Improper scaffold use is a frequent contributor to fall incidents.
- Many scaffold injuries occur during access or incomplete setup.
- Failure to use fall protection significantly increases injury severity.

Humans at Work

Sometimes the risk isn't the scaffold. It's the assumption.

When something is already set up, we assume someone else checked it. That's assumption transfer. And when we see tags and warnings all day, they start blending in. That's sign fatigue. The signal is still there but it just doesn't slow us down as much because we have heard wolf too much.

The lesson is bigger than one scaffold. Warnings are meant to interrupt you. If you don't pause and verify, you've decided it's safe without proving it is. And once your feet leave the ground, that decision belongs to you.

Pause and Think

- What is this warning telling you?
- Has the condition been verified or are you assuming it has been?
- If something fails, are you protected or exposed?