



## March 25 — Work Above, Risk Below

Scaffold crew was trying to erect a scaffold. Pipe fitters came in and started working above. Pipe fitters started welding above the area where the scaffold crew was working. Welding slag was falling from above.

I told the scaffold crew to go do another job so they weren't in the area.

A scaffold crew was actively erecting structure when another crew began welding directly above them. As welding started, slag and sparks began falling into the scaffold erection area.

Look up and down before you start.  
Coordinate before overlapping work.

Scaffold erection already carries risk incomplete platforms, shifting footing, unsecured components. Adding overhead hot work introduces a second hazard layer: falling molten metal.

Welding slag does not drift gently. It falls hot and fast. It can burn through clothing, ignite materials, or cause sudden reaction. A startled worker assembling scaffold at height can lose balance quickly.

This wasn't about welding being unsafe. It was about coordination. Two crews working vertically without communication created exposure for one of them.

On multi-trade jobs, what happens above always affects what happens below.

### Hazards

- Burns from falling slag
- Eye injury
- Clothing ignition
- Startle reaction leading to fall
- Scaffold instability during erection
- Falling object hazard

### Stats

- Falls and struck-by incidents remain leading causes of serious workplace injury.
- Multi-trade coordination failures are common contributing factors in incidents.
- Hot work introduces ignition and burn hazards to adjacent areas.
- Scaffold erection is already considered a higher-risk activity due to incomplete structure.

### Humans at Work

In shared workspaces, we assume more than we communicate. One crew starts a task and assumes the others know what is happening. That is communication assumption. No one says it out loud. Everyone just believes it is understood.

At the same time, the people creating the hazard are not the ones exposed to it. The crew above does not feel the falling slag. The crew below does. That is exposure transfer. When the risk does not land on us, it becomes easier to overlook.

The lesson is bigger than welding. On any multi trade job, what you do affects someone else. If your work creates exposure below, beside, or behind you, it is your responsibility to make sure they know. Shared space requires shared awareness.

### Pause and Think

- Who could be affected by the work you are doing?
- Have you clearly communicated your activity and hazards?
- Are you assuming others know what you are doing?