

**Annex B to Method Statement 3  
Safe Use of Tower Scaffolds****Introduction:**

The guidance contained in this annex primarily applies to prefabricated aluminium tower *scaffolds* but the general principles are also relevant to the use of tube and fitting towers.

Tower scaffolds are one of the most widely used pieces of access equipment in construction and they are involved in numerous accidents each year. These are usually caused by the tower being incorrectly erected or because it is not being properly used. Aluminium towers are light in weight and severe loading or excessive forces applied at the top can easily cause them to overturn. Towers rely on all the components being in place to ensure adequate strength and sections left out cause them to collapse.

**Erecting the Tower:**

There are a number of different types of prefabricated towers available. The manufacturer should provide an adequate instruction manual or erection guide for their particular type. This should give detailed advice on the erection sequence including the bracing requirements and be passed on to the erector.

**THE PERSON ERECTING THE TOWER SHOULD BE COMPETENT AND ADEQUATELY TRAINED!**

**Stability:**

The base of the tower should rest on firm level ground with the wheels or feet properly supported.

**BRICKS OR BUILDING BLOCKS SHOULD NOT BE USED TO TAKE THE WEIGHT OF ANY PART OF THE STRUCTURE!**

The taller the tower the more likely it is to become unstable. If a tower is to be used in exposed conditions ie; outside - regardless of weather conditions;

**THE HEIGHT OF THE WORKING PLATFORM ABOVE GROUND LEVEL SHOULD NOT EXCEED 3 TIMES THE MINIMUM BASE DIMENSION!**

If the tower is used inside, on firm level ground, the ratio may be extended to 3.5.

The height to base ratio should be checked against the instruction manual. The tower might become unstable despite the dimension ratios outlined above if the tower is:

- a sheeted and likely to be exposed to strong winds
- b loaded with heavy equipment or materials
- c used to hoist heavy materials or support rubbish chutes.

To prevent the tower overturning when any of the above apply, additional support must be provided. This may be achieved by rigidly tying the tower to the structure it is serving, or by using ballast weights, guy ropes or ground anchors.

Before using the tower check:

- a that the scaffold is vertical;
- b that the wheel brakes are on.

**Access:**

There must be a **safe** way to get to and from the work platform.

**IT IS NOT SAFE TO CLIMB UP THE END FRAMES OF THE TOWER!**

The only exceptions to this are:

- a where the frame has **built-in** ladder sections with rungs no more than 300mm apart and stiles no more than 480mm apart.
- b where a purpose-made ladder can safely be attached to provide adequate hand and foot hold on the inside (or the outside of a tube and fitting tower).

**Note:** If a ladder is to be fitted to the **outside**; a check **must** be made with the **supplier/manufacture**r to determine whether this is acceptable as the weight of someone climbing the outside may make the tower unstable. Alternatively safe access can be made by means of internal ladders.

**WHERE INTERNAL LADDERS ARE USED THERE MUST BE A SECURE HANDHOLD AT THE LANDING PLACE!**

**Guard-rails and Toe-boards:**

Platforms from which a person could fall more than **2m** **must** be fitted with **guard-rails** and **tee-boards**. This also applies to the **intermediate** platforms. The **guard rails** should be **910mm** **above the platform** with the **tee-boards** **at least 150mm high** with **no more** than **765mm** between the **top** of the toe-board and the **guard-rail**.

**Moving the Tower:**

**Before** attempting to move a mobile tower a check is to be made to ensure that there are no power lines or other overhead obstructions. The ground should be firm and level.

When moving a tower;

- a **PUSH OR PULL ONLY FROM THE BASE - NEVER USE POWERED VEHICLES!**
- b **NEVER MOVE IT WHILE THERE ARE PEOPLE OR MATERIALS ON THE UPPER PLATFORMS!**
- c **NEVER MOVE IT IN WINDY CONDITIONS!**

**Protecting Others:**

When towers are used in public places additional precautions may be necessary.

**BARRIERS ARE TO BE ERECTED AT GROUND LEVEL TO PREVENT PEOPLE WALKING INTO THE TOWER OR WORK AREA!**

**IF THE TOWER IS TO BE LEFT UNATTENDED, THE ACCESS LADDERS ARE TO BE REMOVED OR BOARDED OVER TO PREVENT UNAUTHORISED ACCESS!**