



## Working Towards Safer Scaffolding

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With New South Wales continuing to be in the grip of a major construction building boom it is no surprise that essential building equipment such as scaffolding is in short supply and being imported to meet demand from interstate and overseas. It has become commonplace in the scaffolding industry to even use different brands of scaffolding components, many of which superficially appear to be of similar design. Out of necessity, components are also being mixed to establish a full system for each individual job. In this context there is a measure of uncertainty with the actual strength of scaffolding when there are variations in the metals used, weld quality and condition of the items. This can lead to debilitation of the strength of the scaffold and the possibility of collapse.



In this environment WorkCover inspectors regularly issue notices requiring scaffolding companies to have their rigs tested, and many of these find their way to TestSafe's scaffolding testing facility at Londonderry.



*The photos show the testing of a recently erected scaffold carried out by the Physical Testing Branch at TestSafe's Scaffolding Testing Facility at Londonderry.*

Stringent tests are carried out in accordance with the AS/NZS 1576 series of standards. One of the main tests is a load test of a scaled down version of the full scaffold system, as it would be installed. In this test, a vertical compressive load is applied to a pair of 'standards' (the

main vertical component) by using two hydraulic hand pumps. The test force is applied for a period of 15 minutes during which time deflections or movements of the scaffold components are recorded.

It is critically important that the assembled scaffold does not fail or show any permanent deformation that would render the scaffold structurally unserviceable. The results of the testing are normally assessed by a structural engineer for suitability of the design for the anticipated duties of the scaffolding. Scaffolding also requires a design registration through WorkCover.

