

## Investigation Process

**What triggers a fatality or catastrophe investigation by the N.C. Department of Labor?**

- A worker's death.
- Hospitalization of three or more employees.
- The department may also receive information of a fatality or catastrophe from media reports or referrals from other government agencies.

**How is NCDOL notified?**

- An employer must notify NCDOL within eight hours of a worker's fatality or the hospitalization of three or more workers.

**What will the investigation focus on?**

- The investigation will usually be limited to the events surrounding the accident unless observations at the site indicate a broader investigation is needed.

**What will happen during the investigation?**

- An NCDOL investigator will go to the accident site and collect physical evidence, including photographs.
- The investigator will interview employees, witnesses and management officials about the accident to determine its cause.
- Any violations of safety and health standards will be noted and citations will be issued.

**How long will the investigation take?**

- An investigation can take anywhere from a few weeks to six months, depending on the complexity of the accident.

**When are investigation results disclosed?**

- Citations and penalties, if issued, can be released to the public on the issuance date.
- Other contents of the file cannot be released until the case is closed or final order on citations is rendered.



**NCDOL**  
N.C. Department of Labor  
Cherie Berry, Commissioner

N.C. Department of Labor  
Occupational Safety and Health Division  
1101 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1101  
[www.nclabor.com](http://www.nclabor.com)  
1-800-625-2267



*Above scaffold shows violations typically found at construction sites: workers are not wearing safety harnesses, platforms are not fully planked, and there is no guardrail system.*

## The Investigation

Investigators will seek to determine several factors, including whether:

- Fall protection was provided for employees on scaffolds higher than 10 feet.
- Load limits for scaffolding were observed.
- Scaffold decks were fully planked.
- Employees kept a safe distance from power lines.
- Employees had safe access to the scaffold.
- Scaffolding was inspected by a "competent" person, someone with the authority to stop work and qualified to recognize hazards.
- Employer developed a training program that helped employees become aware of scaffolding hazards.

**Standards:** 29 CFR 1910.28, Scaffolds  
29 CFR 1926, Subpart L—Scaffolds

**Industry Type:** Construction and General Industry

**Accident Type:** Fall from scaffolding

**Statistical Data:** In 2005, NCDOL investigated 80 workplace fatalities. Of the 80, falls accounted for 21 deaths.

**What programs does the Department of Labor have in place to prevent falls from scaffolds?**

**Construction special emphasis program:** Increased training and attention in a dangerous industry.

**Free training:** Workshops, training and consultation in both English and Spanish.

**Publications:** Industry guides that discuss safe scaffolding practices.