

Frequently Asked Questions: New scaffold fire safety requirements

A. Timber scaffolds

1. What is the upcoming change to the use of timber scaffolds?

MOM will reduce the permissible usage duration for timber scaffolds from the current 9 months to 3 months, with effect from 1 January 2027.

2. Why is the permissible duration being reduced?

Timber is combustible and can accelerate fire spread when ignited. Shortening the duration reduces prolonged exposure of combustible materials at worksites, especially where hot works are being carried out, and helps lower scaffold fire risks.

3. How will the change affect existing timber scaffolds set up before 1 January 2027?

Timber scaffolds erected before 1 January 2027 may continue to be used for up to the current 9-month duration. Any new timber scaffold set up from 1 January 2027 onwards will be subject to the new 3-month limit.

4. Can timber scaffolds still be used after the change?

Yes. The change does not ban timber scaffolds but limits their permissible use period to 3 months from 1 January 2027. Users should consider using other type of scaffolds such as metal or aluminium scaffolds if the projected use is expected to exceed 3 months.

5. Will extensions beyond 3 months be allowed?

Extensions may be considered on a case-by-case basis where there are technical constraints that prevent the use of alternative scaffolds. Companies should not assume approval and should prioritise the planning of their projects within the 3-month limit.

6. How can companies seek extension or exemption from the 3-month limit for timber scaffolds?

Companies seeking exemption may submit a request to the Commissioner for Workplace Safety and Health ("Commissioner") at mom_oshd@mom.gov.sg. Applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and approval is not automatic. Companies should submit an exemption request only where there are strong justifications, such as genuine technical, site or project constraints that make it impractical to dismantle, replace or use alternative scaffold systems. The request should not be based on cost savings, project convenience, poor planning or client preferences. Applicants must provide sufficient justifications, including details of the technical constraints, proposed period of use, risk assessment, fire safety measures, inspection regime and controls to ensure safety is not compromised. The request should be submitted to the Commissioner before the timber scaffold is constructed or as soon as reasonably practicable.

7. What should Approved Scaffold Contractors and contractors do to prepare?

They should review ongoing and upcoming project schedules, plan scaffold erection and dismantling timelines, update procurement and contract terms, and strongly consider using more durable non-combustible systems such as aluminium or metal modular scaffolds where practical. Other working-at-height equipment like Mobile Elevating Work Platform (MEWP) should also be considered.

8. What should upstream stakeholders like developers and project consultants do to prepare?

Developers should incorporate the new timber scaffold usage duration requirement into tender and contract documents, including the need to plan for alternative scaffold systems where works at a location are expected to exceed 3 months. Project consultants should review the project programme and assess whether scaffold use at each work location is likely to exceed the 3-month limit. Where extended duration is anticipated, they should advise the developer and contractor early to consider non-timber scaffold options, re-assess the work process, or seek exemption if the use of timber scaffold cannot be replaced.

9. As a scaffold supervisor, what can I do to achieve compliance with the upcoming change?

Scaffold supervisors should advise their company and site management on the upcoming 3-month limit for timber scaffolds and ensure that scaffold use is properly planned and inspected accordingly. They should maintain an up-to-date scaffold register showing the erection date, location, scaffold type, inspection records and expected removal date. They should also continue to conduct weekly inspections, check the condition of the timber scaffold, ensure that scaffold tags or labels are accurate, and promptly highlight any scaffold that may exceed the 3-month limit so that suitable action can be taken.

10. Is the new requirement on mandatory fire-retardant scaffold netting relevant for timber scaffolds?

Yes. The requirement applies to scaffold netting used to envelope any scaffold erected outside of a building, regardless of whether the scaffold is timber or metal. Therefore, where netting is used for this purpose on a timber scaffold, the netting must be fire-retardant. With effect from 1 March 2027, companies shall ensure that the netting used for newly awarded project complies with the required fire-performance specifications, and the necessary compliance measures such as ensuring the availability of fire test report for inspection and batch labelling of netting are in place.

B. Fire-retardant scaffold netting

11. What is the new requirement for scaffold netting?

From 1 March 2027, scaffold netting used to envelope scaffolds erected outside buildings must comply with the fire-retardant specifications set out by the Commissioner for Workplace Safety and Health (“Commissioner”). This measure reduces the risk of flame spread across scaffold netting in the event of a fire.

12. Why is MOM introducing this requirement and which projects will be affected?

Scaffold fires can spread rapidly across combustible materials such as timber and scaffold netting, posing risks to workers, residents, emergency responders and members of the public. The requirement is part of MOM’s new scaffold fire safety requirements to strengthen fire safety at worksites.

The requirement will apply to projects, involving the erection of scaffolds outside buildings, that are awarded on or after 1 March 2027.

13. What type of netting is covered by this requirement?

The requirement applies to overlay or screening nets used to envelope scaffolds erected outside buildings for the containment of construction debris and the prevention of falling debris.

14. How does the new requirement affect ongoing projects or projects awarded before 1 March 2027?

Projects that are awarded before 1 March 2027 will not be subject to the new requirement. Nevertheless, companies are strongly encouraged to replace non-fire-retardant netting with fire-retardant netting where practicable, and to maintain robust fire safety management measures at the workplace, including fire-watch vigilance and keeping combustible materials away from scaffolding and netting.

Stakeholders should keep documentary proof of the project award date for verification by MOM.

15. Who are the parties responsible for ensuring compliance?

Occupiers, scaffold contractors, manufacturers and suppliers must ensure that scaffold netting used, produced or supplied is tested and complies with a fire test standard recognised by the Commissioner.

16. What fire test standards are currently acceptable?

MOM currently accepts scaffold netting tested to one of the following standards: (i) NFPA 701:2023 Test Method 2; (ii) BS 5867-2:2008 Type B; or (iii) JIS L 1091:1999 under the specified categories.

17. What should scaffold netting suppliers and manufacturers do now?

Ahead of the effective date of 1 March 2027, suppliers and manufacturers should prepare compliant product evidence, batch identification and testing arrangements so that their products can meet the mandatory requirement once it is in force. As notified in the circular, scaffold netting will be added to the Fifth Schedule to the WSH Act, which thereby places duties on manufacturers and suppliers to ensure scaffold netting is tested and safe for use.

18. What should stakeholders do for projects that would be awarded on or after 1 March 2027?

Stakeholders should review their procurement arrangements and contractual obligations early to ensure compliance when the new requirement commences.

19. What can stakeholders (e.g. manufacturers, suppliers, scaffold contractors and occupiers) do to demonstrate compliance from 1 March 2027?

Manufacturers and suppliers should ensure that a fire test report, issued by a test laboratory in accordance with one of the acceptable fire test standards, is provided to customers such as scaffold contractors or workplace occupiers. They should also ensure every scaffold netting is labelled with an identification or batch number traceable to the corresponding fire test report.

Scaffold contractors and occupiers should ensure that the relevant fire test report is obtained from their manufacturers and suppliers before the netting is installed in the workplace. They must also ensure that the test report is available onsite to MOM during an inspection or investigation.

20. How should traceability be implemented for fire-retardant scaffold netting?

Each batch of scaffold netting should be accompanied by a fire test report in accordance with one of the acceptable fire test standards. Every net within each batch should be labelled with an identification or batch number traceable to the corresponding fire test report for verification of compliance.

21. What is required from 1 March 2028 to ensure compliance?

From 1 March 2028, fire-retardant scaffold netting will need to be certified by certification bodies accredited by the Singapore Accreditation Council. This new certification scheme ensures product compliance through independent third-party verification, in line with established industry practice. More details will be shared nearer the date.

22. Who can stakeholders contact for clarification on the new requirements?

Stakeholders may contact MOM's Occupational Safety and Health Division at mom_oshd@mom.gov.sg or call 6438 5122 for further queries.