

More contractors than ever are trying to work year-round by enclosing the platform in winter. This can be as simple as using plastic material with wood supports, or it can be very elaborate, consulting engineers for design criteria and specifications.

Either method has to consider two main things:

1. Wind Resistance
2. Overhead protection and restrictions

Wind resistance and a suspended scaffolding platform is very important to consider. The larger the surface area the greater the wind resistance and the greater potential for a platform to become a kite or a sail.

Suspended scaffold platforms have some potential under normal conditions to act like a kite and be affected by wind gusts. When the platform is almost totally enclosed, the potential for this platform to be affected by wind gusts is greater. If a platform comes away from the face of the building the operators are at a greater risk of injury. Operators on this type of platform could lose their balance, fall down, fall out of, or fall between the platform and the building face causing serious injury.

If a platform is enclosed, the operators lose the ability to easily see where they are going. If the building has balconies that must be passed over as they are encountered or some other overhead obstructions such as the rigging, the operators could run into these obstructions accidentally. Running into overhead obstructions is dangerous to the operators and the equipment. Consider what overhead hazards will be created when enclosing a platform.

It may be necessary to install upper limit switches on a platform that is enclosed where the clear line of sight is impaired. Upper limit switches shut down upward travel automatically when overhead obstructions are encountered.

It is also likely that enclosed platforms may need a four-line system, a dog-line setup for the operator safety system, a new emergency plan that considers this platform and above all, more training for the operators.

In conclusion, it is important to consider the hazards that might be present in cold weather operations and to prepare for them. Modifying equipment such as enclosing a platform may get rid of the wind on your back, but it could set you up for other hazards. Consider the risks and if you do not feel comfortable assessing these risks, do not be afraid to ask someone with more experience.

For questions or comments, contact Customer Service at 1-800-560-CLIMB (2546) or customerservice@safeworks.com.