



BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR TRENCHING AND EXCAVATION

INTRODUCTION

1. Review any incidents or “near misses” from the past week.
2. Describe the hazards of the work as they relate to your project. Explain or show the SAFE way of doing the job.
3. Give the TOOL BOX SAFETY TALK

Trenching and excavation are among the most hazardous jobs in construction. The primary hazard is employee injury from collapse. Other potential hazards include falls, falling loads, hazardous atmospheres, and incidents involving mobile equipment. Follow these basic safety procedures when working on excavation sites:

- Inspect trenches before each shift. Look for evidence of possible cave-ins, indications of failure of protective systems, presence of hazardous atmospheres and other hazardous conditions. Make necessary repairs before starting operations.
- Make sure trenches 5 feet or more in depth are stabilized by either shoring, sloping, or have some protective system to prevent a cave-in.
- Verify that there's a safe means of access and egress (ladders, stairways etc.) in trenches that are over four feet deep. Make sure the means of access/egress requires no more than 25 feet of lateral travel for a person to reach the exit structure. The top of the ladder must extend at least 3 feet above the walk-off surface.
- Place spoil piles at least two feet from trench edges.
- Ensure underground utilities are marked and their location verified.
- Test for low oxygen, hazardous fumes and toxic gases.
- Trenches 5 feet deep or greater require a protective system unless the excavation is made entirely in stable rock.
- Keep heavy equipment away from trench edges.
- Know who the competent person is for your crew. It is their responsibility to ensure that proper protection is in place for that excavation. Know your rescue plan.