



Toolbox Talks for Club Employees: Trenching Safety

Each year, excavation and trenching cave-ins result in more than 5,000 serious injuries and 100 deaths in the United States. The key to prevention of this type of loss is good planning. When the side of a trench decides to move, it is too late to be thinking about your safety or the safety of others.

Here are some good safety rules and practices to follow when working in or around excavations.

1. Evaluation of shoring, sloping or other means to eliminate the potential for cave-ins must be performed by a competent person prior to the start of work. This person has to be capable to identify existing and predictable hazards or working conditions that are hazardous, unsanitary, or dangerous to employees and who is authorize to take prompt corrective measurements to eliminate or control this hazards or conditions. He also needs to be knowledgeable in the areas of soil analysis, the use of protective systems and in the requirements of applicable standards and regulations.
2. The competent person should inspect the trench everyday before the work start and as needed throughout the shift. Without this pre-shift inspections, the competent person at the site can be inclined to “make-do” just to get the job done. Shortcuts might be taken, putting employees in significant danger. Perform the pre-shift inspection regardless of the duration of the project or because the ground “just looks solid.”
3. Work in an excavation or trench must at all times be under the immediate supervision of a competent person and never alone.
4. Be aware of underground utilities. It is imperative to realize that just because the wiring and electrical systems for the sprinkler system are low voltage that does not mean that electrocution cannot occur.
5. Excavated material, other materials or equipment must be placed at least 2 feet from the edge of any trench or excavation, which is 4 or more feet in depth.
6. Adequate precautions must be taken to ensure that vibrating equipment and vehicular traffic do not cause a cave-in.
7. Always consider ground water seepage as a potential cause of collapse of any trench or excavation. You should not work in excavation in where there is accumulation of water.
8. Safe access/egress must be provided (stairway, ladder, ramp, etc.). The equipment must be securely fastened in place. Access must be provided and located so no

worker must laterally travel more than 25 feet to access the egress point in any trench or excavation deeper than four feet.

There are specific standards for the materials used for shoring, and for the angles of slopes used to protect workers. All the protection methods depend on the composition of the soil. Additional information is available at www.osha.gov

If you are not certain that the shoring, benching or sloping is adequate, stay out of the excavation. Entering an unprotected excavation or trench may be the last thing you ever do.

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