

OSHA General Duty Clause

Employers shall provide a workplace free of recognized hazards to its employees.
Employee shall comply with all applicable OSHA standards and rules.



Introduction - The primary hazard of trenching and excavation is employee injury from collapse and cave-in. It's critical to correctly analyze soil in order to determine appropriate sloping, benching, and shoring. These excavation and trench-related fatalities in 2016 have nearly doubled the average of the previous five years according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Before Excavating:

- Identify any subsurface installations prior to opening an excavation, ensure they have been properly marked and receive positive response from all known owners/operators of subsurface installations.
- Notify all Regional Notification Centers at least two days before beginning excavation.
- If excavation is within 10ft of high priority subsurface installations, the owner/operator and the excavator must meet on site prior to the excavation.
- Obtain a permit in trenches or excavations 5 feet or deeper into which any person is required to descend.
- Trenches in disturbed soil should be evaluated as they may require additional sheeting and bracing, as will hard compact ground, if there is filled ground nearby.

Daily Inspections:

Daily inspections of excavations, adjacent areas, and protective systems for failure of protective systems, hazardous atmospheres, or other hazardous conditions will be performed by the designate competent person.

A competent person must inspect the trench and protective systems daily before beginning work and through-out the day as conditions change.

Competent Person:

- The competent person must be present in the near proximity of the jobsite while it is being performed – AT ALL TIMES.
- When evidence of cave-ins or slide apparent, all work in the vicinity of the trench must be stopped until the competent person determines it is safe to continue work.
- Structural ramps that are used by employees as a means of access must be designed by a competent person qualified in structural design and must be constructed in accordance with the design.

All Employees:

- All employees should inspect the trench walls for signs of cracking, bulging, or flaking before descending into the trench.
- No one has the authority to require or permit any employee to enter any excavation that has not been properly protected.
- Employees will not be permitted to work in trenches/excavations where there is accumulation of water, unless adequate precautions have been taken.

Precautions:

- Shoring or other means of protection will be present on excavation 5ft or deeper.
- Heavy equipment cannot be operated above slopes, cuts, banks, and cliffs when there are employees working below.
- Idling vehicles are not permitted to be near the excavation site – poisonous exhaust fumes could settle in the excavation.
- Structures must be shored, braced, or underpinned when the stability of the structure is threatened.
- While the excavation is open, the underground utilities must be protected, supported, or removed as necessary.
- Extra precautions must be used when there is exposure to vehicular traffic.
- For trenches/excavations 4 feet or deeper, a ladder or other means of access or egress will be accessible within 25 feet.
- Every trench is a possible trap for hazardous atmospheres. When in doubt, **TEST & VENTILATE**.
- If you are not sure that protective measures taken on the jobsite are adequate, **SPEAK UP & STAY OUT!**