

TRENCH SAFETY

Safety Topic V6-0276

Excavations

Working inside of trenches and excavations is very dangerous.

- All excavations and trenches must be inspected by a Competent Person before workers enter them.
- Never enter an unprotected trench or excavation!
- Excavations more than 5 feet deep must have cave-in protection.
- A safe way to enter the excavation or trench is required when it is 4 feet or deeper.

OSHA Standard 1926.652(a)(1) *Each employee in an excavation shall be protected from cave-ins by an adequate protective system.*



Cave-in protection could be provided using any of these conditions or systems:

- Excavations are made entirely in stable rock.
- Excavations are less than 5 feet in depth and examination of the ground by a competent person provides no indication of a potential cave-in.
- Sloping forms sides of an excavation that are inclined away from the excavation to prevent cave-ins.
- Benching an excavation to form one or a series of horizontal levels or steps, usually with vertical or near-vertical surfaces between levels.
- Utilizing a metal hydraulic, mechanical, or timber shoring system that supports the sides of an excavation to prevent cave-ins.
- Installing a trench box or trench shield that is able to withstand a cave-in and protect workers inside the excavation.

Discussion

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What is considered a “safe way” to enter a trench that is deeper than 4 feet?

What type of cave-in protection have you seen most often on excavation projects?