

Don't Let Safety Slide: Working Safely in Excavations



General

- Soil is extremely heavy.
 - a cubic foot weighs up to 140 pounds
 - a cubic yard weighs over 3,000 pounds
- Even shallow excavation cave-ins are frequently fatal.
- Make sure you know the designated competent person.
- Check for a protective system in excavations over 5 feet deep:
 - shield (trench box)
 - shoring
 - sloping
 - benching
- Make sure the competent person has authorized entry.
- Report all problems immediately to the competent person.
- Be sure a means of exit is within 25 feet of you:
 - ladder
 - ramp
 - stairway
- Immediately leave the excavation and report it if you see:
 - cracks in the excavation's wall
 - saturated soil
 - standing water or
 - any other changes in soil conditions
- Immediately report surface encumbrances that could change conditions:
 - improperly placed spoil piles
 - heavy equipment operating nearby
 - other sources of vibration such as blasting nearby or
 - any other surface encumbrances that could change soil conditions
- Report missing guardrails on excavation walkways 6 feet high or higher.
- Report missing fall protection barriers around remote excavations.

Other Potential Excavation Hazards

- Be aware of other excavation hazards.
 - oxygen deficiency
 - carbon monoxide
 - sewer gases
 - leaky gas mains
 - other flammable and/or toxic gases



Utilities

- Never dig until all utilities are marked.
- Stop and report it if you uncover a utility.

Emergency Procedures

- Immediately exit the excavation.
- Never attempt an excavation cave-in rescue.
- Call 911.
- Report to the competent person.