

MOCGA Toolbox Talk

Trench Safety



SAFETY TIPS

EMPLOYEES MUST KNOW OSHA'S EXCAVATION SAFETY TRIGGER NUMBERS

- **4 feet** – employees need to be given adequate access or egress. (ladder or steps into the trench)
- **4 feet** – perform atmospheric (air quality) testing where there is likely to be a hazard.
- **5 feet** – sloping, shoring or a trench box is required.
- **25 feet** of lateral travel requires additional access or egress installed. (ladder placed within 25 feet of each worker)
- **18 inches** – minimum clearance above the ground for trench box.
- **6 feet** – guardrails or barriers are required to prevent employees from falling into the trench.

ANY TRENCH OVER 5 FEET IN DEPTH REQUIRES PROTECTIVE SHORING, SHIELDING, BENCHING OR SLOPING.

COLLAPSES PROVIDE NO WARNING.

WORKERS CAN BE TRAPPED IMMEDIATELY.

TRENCHES CAN EXERT UP TO 15,000 LBS. OF FORCE ON TRAPPED WORKERS.

Introduction: Trenching and excavation employees should never be required to work in unsafe, deadly trenches. Excavation companies should make every effort to prevent cave-ins on the jobsite. Even though safe trenching methods have been taught for forty years, collapses still kill construction workers today. Review this safety document with members of your organization that work “in the trenches.”

Contact 811 or 1-800-DIG-RITE or log onto www.mo1call.com to have underground utilities located before beginning excavation!

ADDITIONAL TRENCH SAFETY INFO

- Trenches less than 5 feet in depth may need shoring or a trench box if soil conditions are poor.
- Digging near landfills or old gas stations could expose trench workers to toxic gases.
- Inspect each trench or excavation for hazards and safety concerns on a daily basis.
- Stay a minimum of 10” away from overhead power lines. If contact is expected, contact the local power company to help protect workers.
- Make sure trench protective measures are appropriate for the soil classification.
- Make sure materials or equipment that may fall or roll into the trench are moved at least 2 feet back.
- Provide warning and barrier systems when trenches are near traffic areas.
- Never allow workers to stand or work beneath loads or digging equipment.
- Never lift or lower workers with digging equipment
- Use ladders to provide safe access and egress in trenches 4 feet or deeper.
- To provide emergency egress, make sure ladders are placed within 25 feet of all workers.

These advisory materials have been developed from national standards and sources believed to be reliable, however, no guarantee is made as to the sufficiency of the information contained in the material and the Missouri Common Ground Alliance assumes no liability for its use. Advice about specific situations should be obtained from a qualified safety professional.

