

Trench Safety

When you dig a trench or an excavation, you're creating unstable space. The walls of a trench are under extreme pressure since they are no longer supported by the dirt that's been removed. If you work in a trench without proper safeguards and planning, you are putting you and your crew at danger.

The dangers of trenching and excavations include, falls, falling objects, cave-ins, hazardous atmospheres, and work around heavy machinery. Trench collapse present a serious risk and can happen without warning. Never enter an unprotected trench! Remember that one cubic yard of soil can weigh as much as a car. You may think that you could dig yourself out, but even if your face and shoulders were above the ground, the weight of the soil could make it impossible for you to move your arms or even breath.

Before you enter a trench, make sure you know the answers to these questions?

- What type of soil are you working with?
- Is there a competent person?
- What type of protective system will be used?
- Is there a hazardous atmosphere for example fumes from equipment?
- Have all the necessary daily inspections occurred?
- What are the methods of getting in and out of trench?
- Have utilities been located and identified?

A competent person is someone who is capable of identifying existing and predictable hazards and who has the authorization to take prompt corrective actions to eliminate those hazards. He or she will inspect the trench, test for hazardous atmospheres and decide whether or not it is safe to enter the trench.

A protective system is required anytime a person is in an excavation greater than 4ft in depth unless excavation is in stable rock. Protective systems include shoring, shields (also known as trench boxes), and sloping or benching. Designing a protective system can be complex because many factors need to be considered: soil classification, depth of cut, water contents of the soil, changes in weather and equipment in area.

Falling into a trench can be fatal. Sometimes people forget to consider fall protection around trenches because they are working at ground level. But the bottom of the trench may be many feet lower than the ground level. Fall protection like guardrails, may be required.



For more information checkout video [here](#)

Jobsite: _____ Date: _____

Employee Name (Please Print)	Employee Signature