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OSHA ALERT

Keep Trenches Safe for Workers

Trench collapses and cave-ins are a serious threat to workers, but they can be prevented. OSHA reminds employers that worker safety is a priority, and the agency has resources available to protect workers.

The following safe work practices will help keep trenches safe for workers:

- **PREPARE** a *safe trench*.
 - Provide safe entry and exit before starting work.
 - Keep materials at least 2 feet away from the edge.
- **PROTECT** workers from a cave-in by using *protective systems*.
 - Sloping or benching trench walls, or
 - Shoring trench wall with supports, or
 - Shielding trench walls with trench boxes.
- **INSPECT** the trench for *hazards*.
 - Look for standing water and other environmental hazards.
 - Never enter a trench unless it has been inspected and approved by the competent person.



Trench Safety

For more information on common hazards, visit OSHA's [Trenching and Excavation](#) page.

Employers can also take advantage of OSHA's [On-Site Consultation Program](#), which offers no-cost and confidential occupational safety and health services to small- and medium-sized businesses. Consultation services are separate from enforcement, and do not result in penalties or citations. Contact the [local OSHA area office](#) for assistance.



OSHA alerts are issued on occasion to draw attention to worker safety and health issues and solutions.