

Trenching and Shoring



There are many potential hazards when working in trenches. Probably the most common hazard at any jobsite is the threat of cave-in. A cave-in occurs when walls of trench collapse.

Cave-ins can be deadly. Wall failures often occur suddenly, with little or no time for the worker to react. The weight of the soil can crush the body, causing death or serious injury in a matter of minutes. A trench doesn't have to be large to create a life threatening hazard; so trenching must be taken seriously.

Cave-ins are more likely to occur in unprotected trenches where:

- The trench is dug in unstable soil or in soil that has been dug in before
- There is excessive vibration from construction equipment or vehicle traffic around the trench
- Too much weight near the sides of a trench, from equipment or the spoil pile
- Water has collected in the trench
- Changes in weather conditions (freezing, melting, or sudden heavy rain)

There are ways to help control these conditions. In order to safely and efficiently work around trenches and prevent cave-ins from occurring:

- Re-route traffic whenever possible, and keep only the heavy construction equipment needed near the trench
- Keeping the spoil pile at least 2 feet back from the edge of the trench
- Pumping water out of the trench before anyone enters
- Using protective systems when required

Shoring is a method of protecting workers from cave-ins of material that can fall or roll into a trench. If a trench is less than 5 feet deep, OSHA does not require shoring, unless a person sees signs of a potential cave-in. In that case, it is up to the planners of the construction project and the people on-site to determine if and when shoring is necessary. It is important to remember that a wall collapse in a trench 4 1/2 feet deep can still have serious results!

For the safety of your employees, it is important that they are aware of OSHA regulations and the dangers of Trenching and Shoring. Please visit www.OSHA.gov for more information on this topic. Telcom provides safety videos to policyholders at no cost. If you are a policyholder and are interested in receiving a video regarding Trenching and Shoring, please contact Tina Wynter at tmw@telcominsgrp.com.

Let Telcom help light your way while in the trenches. Included in this quarter's safety mailer we've provided a swivel-headed, clip-on flashlight. As an additional "perk" for being a Telcom policyholder, please let Tina Wynter, tmw@telcominsgrp.com, know if you would like to receive more of these, free of charge, to distribute to your employees at a safety meeting.

THIRD QUARTER SAFETY MAILER

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