

Requirements of OSHA Excavation Standard

Section 1926.651 of 29 CFR 1926, Subpart P, Trenching and Excavations, outlines a number of general requirements that must be met to protect workers exposed in excavations. These requirements are presented in detail in TrenchSafety and Supply's NUCA "Competent Person" classes.

Requirements include:

- Surface encumbrances, such as rocks, trees, telephone poles, fire hydrants, etc., must be removed or supported.
- Underground installations, which include gas pipes, electrical, sewer, water, etc., must be located and marked prior to working in the area. These installations must be protected, supported, or removed while a trench is open.
- Access and egress are means to enter and exit an excavation. Trenches four feet or more in depth must have some form of egress. Ladders, stairs, or ramps should be no more than 50 feet apart—resulting in a maximum of 25 feet of travel for any worker—and ladders must extend at least three feet above the side of the excavation.
- Employees exposed to vehicular traffic must be provided with, and wear, warning vests or highly visible garments.
- Employees must be protected from falling loads.
- There must be warning systems for mobile equipment to prevent vehicles from falling into a trench. Methods include barricades, hand or mechanical signals, stop logs, and grading away from the excavation.
- Employees must be protected

Continued on next page...

Who IS Responsible for Jobsite Safety?

The law says every employer. Some details will prove helpful.

WHAT IF YOU'RE THE GENERAL (PRIME) CONTRACTOR?

The prime contractor, according to OSHA, "assumes all obligations" and "in no case... shall be relieved of overall responsibility for compliance with the requirements of the part for all work to be performed under the contract." This included work being done by all subcontractors at your jobsites.

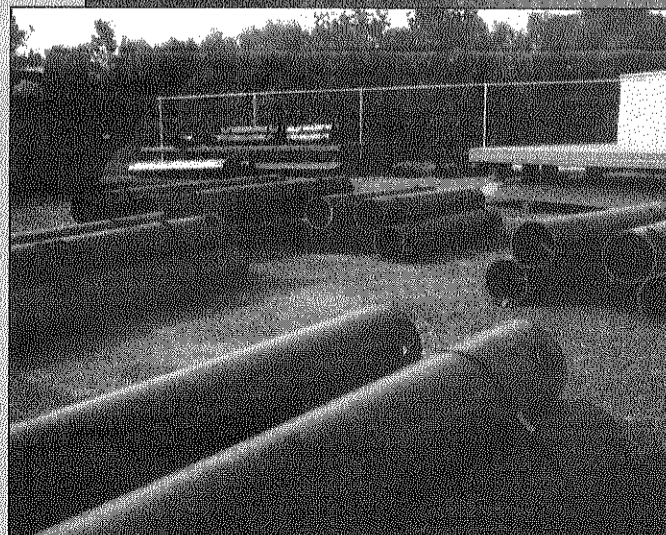
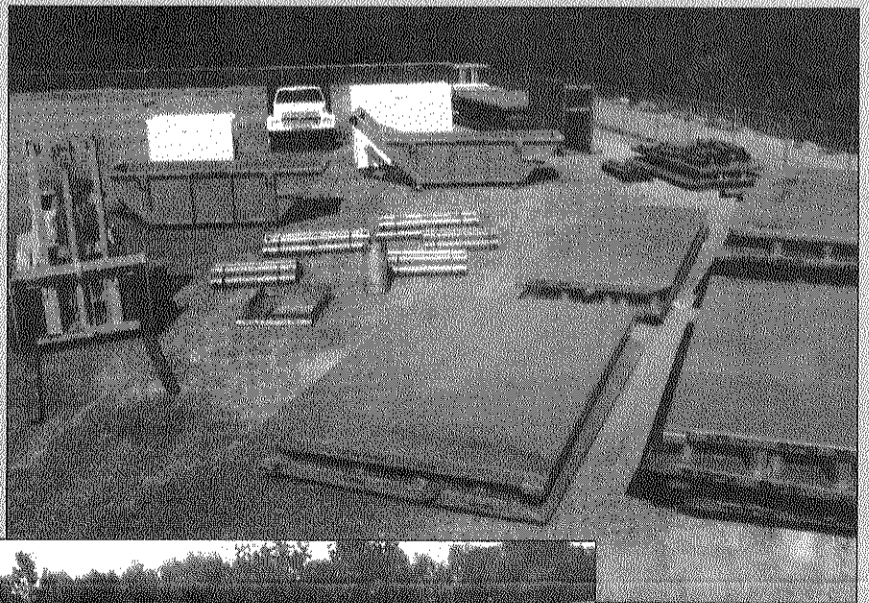
WHAT IF YOU'RE A SUBCONTRACTOR?

Again, the law states, "with respect to subcontracted work, the prime contractor and any subcontractor... shall be deemed to have joint responsibility." The subcontractor "of any tier" is still responsible for the safety of workers involved in his part of the job.

WHO CAN BE FINED?

The general contractor, the subcontractor, and even the owner of the project are subject to enforcement and fines when it can be shown they "could have had (such) knowledge with the exercise of reasonable diligence." The standard says: "Where joint responsibility exists, both the general (prime) contractor and his subcontractor or subcontractors, regardless of tier, shall be considered subject to the enforcement provisions of the Act."

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Training now available...

Confined Space Hazards: Do You Have A Plan?

Are your crews prepared to safely enter confined spaces such as sewers, culverts, manholes, and utility vaults? Unless your company has an established Confined Space Entry Program, the answer is probably "no." If a worker has to enter a confined space for any reason, even once a year, a Confined Space Entry Program must be established.

The following examples of confined-space accidents were reported in the National Utility Contractors Association's (NUCA) magazine:

- While cleaning and repairing a drain line, a 21-year-old worker died in a 4 x 8 foot waste water holding tank. Sulfuric acid was used to unclog its floor drain. The worker collapsed and fell, face down, in six inches of water. A second 21-year-old worker attempted a rescue, and was also overcome and collapsed. The first worker was pronounced dead at the scene, and the second died two weeks later. Cause of the deaths was asphyxiation by methane gas. Sulfuric acid vapors may have been a factor.
- A 20-year-old construction worker died while attempting to refuel a gasoline-powered pump used to remove waste water from a 66" sewer line under construction. The pump was 3,000 feet from where the worker had entered. A 28-year-old state inspector, who entered from a second point in a rescue attempt, also died. Both deaths were caused by carbon monoxide intoxication. In addition to the fatalities, 30 firefighters and eight construction workers were treated for carbon monoxide exposure.

On November 11, in Memphis, TrenchSafety and Supply will present it's first NUCA-approved course on Confined Space Entry. The instructor, George Kennedy, is National Safety Director for NUCA. The \$90 fee includes a workbook and lunch.

Space is limited in this session, so call TrenchSafety for details, (901) 346-5800 or (800) 865-5801.



TrenchSafety's staff (l to r) Sam Noe, Melissa Dow, Reynolds Cheney, and David Dow.

"OSHA Excavation" from page 1

- from exposure to hazardous atmospheres. Testing is required before employees enter a trench if there is a possibility that a hazardous atmosphere exists, or could reasonably be expected to exist.
- Emergency rescue equipment must be available when a hazardous atmosphere exists or could reasonably be expected to exist. Harnesses and lifelines are required when employees enter bell-bottom pierholes and other deep confined spaces.
 - Water accumulation must be controlled to prevent cave-ins.
 - Structures adjacent to an excavation must be stabilized to protect employees.
 - Employees must be protected from loose rock or soil.
 - Fall protection is required for walkways and bridges over trenches. Bridges and walkways must be equipped with standard guard rails and toe boards. Other fall protection may be required.
 - Remotely located excavations—wells, pits, shafts, etc.—must be backfilled, covered, or barricaded.

Sure, being careful, and providing a safe working environment for your employees and contractors is a matter of Federal law. But it also requires a healthy dose of good ol' common sense.

Certified NUCA Training Classes

"Competent Person" Training

- Wednesday, October 26 — Memphis
- Thursday, October 27 — Tupelo, Miss.
- Wednesday, November 16 — Jackson, Tenn.
- Wednesday, December 7 — Memphis
- Thursday, December 8 — Jonesboro, Ark.

"Confined Space" Training

- Friday, November 11 — Memphis

Space is limited!

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for your staff.

(800) 865-5801

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This newsletter provides a brief overview of safety regulations and systems. It is not intended to provide specific legal or engineering advice. Please refer to OSHA CFR 29, Part 1926, Subpart P, "Excavation and Trenches," to other governmental regulations, and to manufacturers' instructions for specific information.

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