

HAZARD ALERT



TRENCHES



Am I in danger?

If the walls of the trench are not . . .

- ▶ **sloped or benched**
- ▶ **shored with supports**
- ▶ **shielded with a trench box**

And if the trench . . .

- ▶ has **not** been inspected by a competent person
- ▶ does not have a safe way to enter or exit
- ▶ has **standing water** or **hazardous gases**
- ▶ has equipment or materials close to the edge



Unsafe Trench

Then the answer is **YES**.

An unprotected trench can collapse in less than a second.

Never enter a trench unless it has been properly inspected.

How can a trench kill me?

Dirt is heavy. Really heavy. One cubic yard of dirt is the weight of a mid-sized car.



The weight of soil is so heavy that it will crush you.

You could **die in minutes from a trench collapse...** even if your head and arms are above the dirt.

Trench walls may look stable, but DON'T TRUST them.

Find out more about construction hazards.

To receive copies of this Hazard Alert and cards on other topics:

call **301-578-8500** or
email **CPWR-r2p@cpwr.com**



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Before you go in...

1 Find the "competent person"

OSHA requires employers to appoint a "competent person" on trench jobs. This person must inspect the trench every day before work, after rain, and when conditions change. When there is a problem, the competent person has the authority to stop work and fix the problem.



2 Work only in protected areas

The trench should be shielded, shored or sloped. Wear your hard hat. What is wrong with the jobsite below? The worker is outside of the trench box. There is no safe way to enter or exit. The worker is not wearing a hard hat.



3 Check your escape

It only takes a second for a trench to collapse. Always be aware of your escape route. If you are in a trench 4 feet or deeper, you must be within 25 feet of a ladder, ramp or stairway.



Learn more about working safely in trenches:

- ▶ **OSHA Quick Card:** <https://tinyurl.com/Trenches-Quick-Card>
- ▶ **NIOSH "Preventing Worker Deaths from Trench Cave-Ins":** <https://tinyurl.com/NIOSH-Trench>
- ▶ **CPWR Trench Fact Sheet:** <https://www.tinyurl.com/CPWR-Trenches>



**If you think you are in danger:
Contact your supervisor. Contact your union.
Call OSHA 1-800-321-OSHA**