

# SAFETY AWARENESS

Brief Topic Safety Refresher Training For Associates

2024

## Preventing Trench Collapse

### Keep the Surface Clean

Trench collapse occurs when the trench walls cannot contain the pressure put on them by the surrounding soil. While this can be a problem at any depth, it is made worse when excavated materials are piled at the edge of the trench. To reduce the pressure put on trench walls:

- Pile all excavated materials at least 2 feet back from the edge of the trench. If there is not enough room to allow at least 2 feet, remove excavated materials from the immediate location.
- Do not work around the edge of the trench when others are below.
- Keep equipment away from the trench edge. Not only can it cause cave-ins but there is also a chance that it could fall on those working below.

### Slope for Stability

Another way to reduce the pressure put on trench walls is to use a sloping or benching system.

- Sloped Walls – A 34-degree slope should be used when digging to prevent a section near the top from giving out and burying the bottom of the trench.
- Benching – When there is enough space available, benching allows a trench to be dug in a series of steps that slowly descend to the deepest point.

### Reinforce Trench Walls

Once a trench has been dug, the walls should be braced in a way that will protect those working in the area if a cave-in does occur.

- Construct a support system made with posts, beams, shores or planking and hydraulic jacks.
- Never excavate more than 2 feet past the bottom of the support system.
- Make sure there is always a safe exit route within 25 feet of where you are working in the trench.

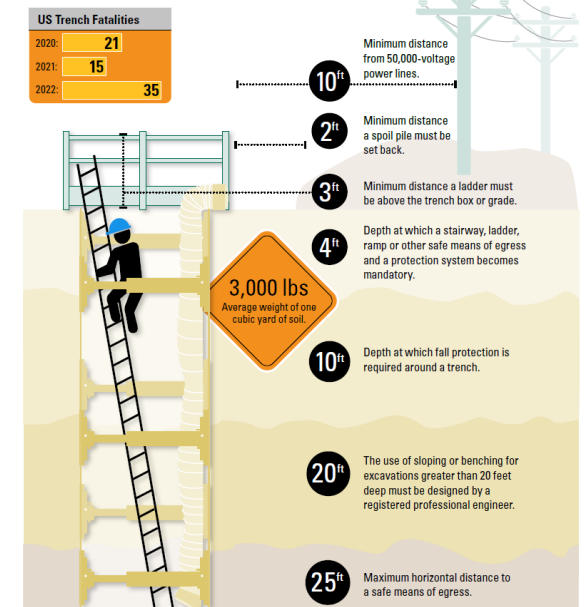
### Trench Boxes

A trench box can be used as a convenient alternative to building a support system directly into a trench. However, for it to provide the proper protection, it must be used properly.

- Always place the trench box before entering the trench. Enter directly into the box.
- Never move the box while workers are in the trench.
- Never perform work in the trench outside of the box.

### Trench Safety By the Numbers

For the complete regulations and exceptions, refer to the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 296-155-650.



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