



026: Excavation

Traffic controls and work area protection

If you are exposed to motor vehicle traffic or heavy mobile equipment, wear your fluorescent warning vest.

If working near street traffic, ensure traffic controls are in place before you begin work. If they are not, notify your foreman.

Ensure work area protection—guardrails, rope-off tape, screens, plywood covers, and other barricades—is in place to protect workers and the public. If such protection is not in place, stop work until your foreman can correct the situation.

Ensure warning lights and warning signs are in place. If they aren't notify your foreman.

Ensure you have adequate crossing means over excavations where necessary. If you don't, notify your foreman.

If asked to assist an equipment operator with obstructions or foot traffic, do so. Let your foreman know, if such assistance is taking too much time away from the work you must do—because of conditions, it may be necessary to assign an assistant.

Utility installations

Someone should have already identified utility lines and infrastructure—prior to excavation, ensure you know what they found and where those items are.

Protect, support, or remove utility items when excavation is open.

Protecting workers in the hole:

- Ensure sides of the excavation slope in a ratio that is appropriate to the type of soil.
- Shore, brace, or underpin adjoining structures as needed to provide stability to adjoining bridges, sidewalks, streets, and other structures. Instructions for this should be in your work plan, but never take that for granted.
- Install shoring per the OSHA standards.
- Do not subject trench shields to loads exceeding their design capacity.
- Remove or support trees, poles, landscaping, and other items that might create a hazard.
- Ensure equipment, excavated soil, and materials are at least two feet from the edge of the excavation.
- Provide a safe means of egress and ingress every 25 feet in trench excavations that are more than four feet deep.
- Take the necessary steps to eliminate water accumulation. This may include pumping, draining, or siphoning.

Hazardous atmospheres

Test for explosive atmosphere for any of the following situations:

- Buried gas lines within 100 feet.

Discussion leader duties for this session:

Review your company's excavation safety policy, so you can answer questions about it. Also, be sure you know (or have ready access to) the emergency numbers required for this job. Those may include the project superintendent, the local sheriff, the local fire department, and each of the local utilities. If you are unsure of what numbers you need, ask your site safety director.

What this Safety Talk covers:

How to reduce the likelihood of an injury during excavation operations.

Discussion notes :

