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# Safety Matters

## Trench Safety Basics

Trenching and excavation are among the most hazardous construction operations. A trench is a narrow excavation, deeper than it is wide, with a maximum width of 15 feet. It is critical to understand the fundamentals of safely conducting work in and around trenches.

- **Ensure that your Competent Person (CP) is on site.** The CP should be trained and experienced in supervising trenching projects. They oversee the trenchwork to identify existing & predictable hazards associated with the trenching operation.
- **Inspect the trench and surrounding environment daily.** It is critical to inspect trench conditions before and during work. Factors such as standing water, surface cracks, or atmospheric hazards can significantly alter trench stability.
- **Keep equipment and materials away from edges of the trench.** To prevent hazards of rolling, sliding, falling, or cave-in, do not leave idle materials near the trench edges.
- **Use protective systems in trenches.** Before entering a trench greater than 5 feet deep, ensure that appropriate excavation protection is in place to prevent a cave-in. Protection can include sloping, shoring, or shielding (i.e., trench boxes).
- **Do not work under raised loads.** Be conscious of the Fall Zone – the area where suspended materials could land if securement fails.
- **Get help if needed.** If trench conditions appear to be unstable or unsafe, notify the CP to halt work and address concerns with appropriate corrective measures.



Idle Equipment Away  
from Edges



Competent Person  
on Site



Inspect  
Environment

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