

OSHA QUICK CARD™

Protect Yourself Trench Safety



- **Do not enter an unprotected trench!**
- Trench collapses cause dozens of fatalities and hundreds of injuries each year.
- Trenches **5** feet deep or greater require a **protective system**.
- Trenches **20** feet deep or greater require that the protective system be **designed by a registered professional engineer**.

Protective Systems for Trenches

- **Sloping** protects workers by cutting back the trench wall at an angle inclined away from the excavation.
- **Shoring** protects workers by installing aluminum hydraulic or other types of supports to prevent soil movement.
- **Shielding** protects workers by using trench boxes or other types of supports to prevent soil cave-ins.

Competent Person

OSHA standards require that trenches be inspected daily and as conditions change by a competent person prior to worker entry to ensure elimination of excavation hazards.

Safety Tips

- Inspect trenches at the start of each shift, following a rainstorm or after any other hazardous event.
- Test for low oxygen, hazardous fumes and toxic gases before entering a trench.
- Keep heavy equipment and excavation spoils at least two feet away from the trench edge.
- Provide stairways, ladders, ramps or other safe means of access in all trenches 4 feet or deeper.

Think Safety!

For more complete information:

OSHA Occupational
Safety and Health
Administration
U.S. Department of Labor
www.osha.gov (800) 321-OSHA

OSHA 3197-04N-04