

STAY SAFE WITH SOCIETY

TRENCH SAFETY

When you go into a trench, you could be dead in a matter of minutes. We know what causes trenches to collapse, but we think it won't happen to us. There are ways to keep the odds in our favor.

A collapse of either side wall can kill within a matter of minutes. The separation of a mass of soil or rock from the side that suddenly moves into an excavation, either by falling or sliding, is sufficient to trap or bury a person. Soil weighs between 100 and 130 pounds per cubic foot -- or more than 2,700 pounds per cubic yard. That's equivalent to having your car or pickup truck fall on you.

Water from groundwater or a heavy rain reduces cohesion and the ability of soil to stick together. Water in the bottom of a trench undermines the side walls.

Evaluate the vibration from traffic or nearby construction. Vibration tends to collapse the air pockets found in soil, which allows nearby particles to move. This happens without warning, resulting in a major section of the side wall falling into the trench. The side walls of an open trench will dry out when exposed to the air for more than a day. The cohesiveness of the soil will change as the moisture evaporates, most likely resulting in a less-cohesive mixture.

Checklist:

- Trenches of 4 feet or more in depth must have additional protection.
- Remove standing water with pumps.
- Install protection if water is seeping in from the bottom or side walls.
- The toe of the spoil must be at least 2 feet from the edge of the trench (including sloped trenches).
- Install protective systems from the top down so that no one works in an unprotected trench.
- Don't cross over a trench unless you can use a walkway with guard rails.
- To prevent damage, support any utilities that run across the trench.



**THE TOE OF THE SPOIL
MUST BE AT LEAST 2
FEET FROM THE EDGE
OF THE TRENCH.**

A Small Detail
That Can Make a
Big Difference.

Risk Control Services, riskcontrol@societyinsurance.com

150 Camelot Drive, P.O. Box 1029, Fond du Lac, WI 54936-1029

P. 888.576.2438 | societyinsurance.com

This information is advisory, and it must not be assumed that it has detected all unsafe acts or conditions. This information is designed to assist you in recognizing potential safe work problems and not to establish compliance with any law, rule or regulation.

© 2013 Society Insurance



Small details. Big difference.™

