Toolbox talk

Trenching and excavation

Cave-in protection, getting in and out, keeping the edge clear, and the daily inspection.

A trench wall can let go with no warning, and there's rarely time to get out. This talk covers protection, getting in and out, the edge, and the daily check.

Key point **Never get in a trench 5 feet or deeper unless it's sloped, shored or shielded.**

What happened

In Oregon in 2016, a 29-year-old worker was laying sewer pipe in a trench 10 feet deep. The wall gave way where there was no protection. His crew couldn't dig him out, and rescuers had to shore the trench before they could go in. Oregon FACE report 2016-16-1

Protection before you go in

Any trench 5 feet or deeper needs a protective system, which means sloping or benching the walls, shoring, or a trench box. The only exception is solid, stable rock. A shallower trench needs one too, unless the competent person has checked the ground and sees no sign of a cave-in.

Work inside the box. Never stay in it while it's being set, pulled or moved up.

Getting in and out

A trench 4 feet or deeper needs a ladder, stairway or ramp within 25 feet of where you're working. Use it every time. Don't climb the shoring or the box, and don't jump in.

Keep the edge clear

Keep spoil, pipe, tools and equipment at least 2 feet back from the edge, or hold them back with retaining devices. Weight at the edge pushes on the wall you're standing next to.

The daily check

A competent person inspects the trench, the area around it and the protective system before work starts, as needed during the shift, and after every rainstorm.

If they find cracks, a bulging wall, water seeping in or a box that has shifted, everyone gets out until it's fixed. You can call it too. Get out first and ask questions after.

Show me Walk to the trench together. Point out the protective system, the nearest ladder, and anything sitting within 2 feet of the edge.

Ask the crew

1. Who is the competent person on this trench today, and when did they last check it?
2. If the wall started to crack while you were in the trench, what would you do first?

Crew sign-in

Trenching and excavation

Date _____ **Site or project** _____

Presented by _____ **Company** _____

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Signing means you attended this talk and had the chance to ask questions.