

Excavations

Toolbox Talk G09



People die in trenches – the vast majority of fatal accidents occur in trenches less than 1.5 metres deep.

Why?

People don't see that a shallow trench is a risk. A cubic metre of earth can weigh over 1.5 tonnes, the only body that can support that is a dead one.

Precautions

1. Before digging check for services – water, gas, electric – always treat as live.
2. Excavations must be supported or battered back where necessary to prevent collapse.
3. Use ladders for access and egress, do not climb supports.
4. Fit edge protection around excavations to protect the general public, regardless of depth of excavation. If vehicles and plant operate nearby barriers must be strong enough.
5. Keep soil heaps back at least the depth of the excavation from the edge.
6. Ensure stop blocks are fitted when dumpers are tipping into excavations and that they are guided by a signaller.
7. Wear your hard hat at all times.
8. Never throw tools or materials to someone in an excavation, pass hand-to hand or lower them from a rope if too deep to pass.
9. Excavation must be checked prior to entry at start of shift.
10. Weekly inspection must be carried out by a competent person and results must be recorded.

Causes of excavation accidents

1. Shoring not installed or trench not battered back where it was required.
2. Operatives trying to jump across the excavation.
3. Unauthorised removal or alteration of supports or braces.
4. Operatives working beyond the unsupported areas of the excavation.
5. Operatives re-entering excavations without inspecting walls or shoring after heavy rainfall.
6. Materials falling into excavations due to being placed too close to the edge.
7. Vehicles driving into excavations because timber baulks or stop blocks not in place
8. People falling into trenches due to no edge protections being fitted.

REMEMBER: A CUBIC METRE OF EARTH CAN WEIGH 1.5 TONNES – IF YOU GET IT WRONG THE CONSEQUENCES COULD BE GRAVE!

