By the Numbers – Excavation and Trenching



DID YOU KNOW?

In 2003, OSHA conducted on investigation because there were 48 trench fatalities. Because of these steps with more information of trench hazards and stepped up enforcement the annual trench fatalities declined. But fatalities still occur.

The results of OSHA's investigation are useful in understanding why trench fatalities ***still occur today*** and how to avoid them.

Main Reason

1. Trenches collapse because they are not properly protected.
2. Protective systems were properly employed in only 24 percent of the trenches. In the remainder, a protective system was either improperly used (24%), available but not in use (12%) or simply unavailable (64%).

Competent Person

Further, despite the fact that environmental conditions were a contributing factor in 68 percent of the fatalities, the competent person was not onsite when the fatality occurred 86 percent of the time. Most of the time (65%) the employer had not identified the soil type even though soil type is a factor in trench cave-ins.

Mondays

Also, a disproportionate number of fatalities (36%) occurred on Mondays, probably because rain or other factors changed conditions over the weekend. Under OSHA regulations, the competent person must inspect trench work in progress before each shift and…