

Trench Fatalities are on the Rise: What to Do to Stop Them

With the summer in full swing, so are construction activities. Trenching and excavations are primary construction activities and can result in cave-ins and fatalities. When trenching and excavations take place at your organization, it is important to provide shoring protection, inspect the trench, and continually monitor the weather (affects the soil). OSHA recognizes trenching and excavations are some of the most dangerous activities a site can perform, especially with a “68% increase of fatalities in the first half of 2022” (OSHA National News Release, 2022).

If you have construction activities performed at your site this summer, it is important to ensure proper use of trench protection systems to prevent cave-ins. Some tips include:

- Utilize protective systems on trenches deeper than 5 feet
- Keep materials and soil at least 2 feet from the edge of a trench
- Have a knowledgeable person inspect each trench
- Ensure trenches are free of standing water and atmospheric hazards
- Make sure there is a safe means of entering and exiting the trench.

There is currently a National Emphasis Program on Trenching and Excavations to prevent serious injuries and fatalities during trenching and excavation operations:

https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/enforcement/directives/CPL-02-00-161_0.pdf.

For more guidance on trenching and excavations, visit OSHA’s website at: <https://www.osha.gov/trenching-excavation>.

For more information regarding the latest trench-related fatalities, read OSHA’s National News Release at:

<https://www.osha.gov/news/newsreleases/national/07142022>.

For additional information on the SMCX’s services, please visit the SMCX-hosted website at: <https://www.smscx.org/>.

