

THE FLOW

JUNE IS TRENCH SAFETY MONTH!

Trench Safety Stand Down Week

June 20–24, 2022

Make plans for your company to participate in this year's NUCA Trench Safety Stand Down Week. Being a part of our popular 6th annual TSSD Week will help educate your employees on trenching hazards at the jobsite.

**Join us on Thursday,
June 16th at 11:30 am
For
TSSD Kick-off Event
At
United Rentals Trench Safety
5955 Philips Highway
Please RSVP by Friday,
June 10th**

***Our goal is to have at least
one person from each of our
contractors member firms
present.***

Lunch will be served.

JUNE 2022

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

I hope you are all well. As always, thank you to our monthly sponsors! Without you, this great organization would not exist.

Excavating and shoring is what we do. It's our business. Our livelihoods. We do it every day. It is also one of the most dangerous aspects of our industry. This past month, there were at least 2 major trench collapses in the state of Florida. In one instance, the victim was lucky and was saved. In the other, 2 people lost their lives. Please have their families, friends, coworkers and employers in your thoughts and prayers. Accidents happen, but it's our duty to do everything we can to prevent/minimize them. For those of you who don't know, the week of June 20th-24th is National Trench Safety Stand Down Week. NUCA of North Florida, in partnership with United Rentals Trench Safety, will be hosting a Trench Safety Stand Down Kick Off event on June 16th at the United Rentals Trench Safety office on Phillips Highway. Come and find out some ways that you can participate in the stand down the following week.

I hope all of you and your employees had a great time at the Jumbo Shrimp game. We had over 300 people attend! It turned out to be a beautiful evening, even though the Shrimp lost. NUCA National held their Washington Summit, lobbying at the national level for the interests of NUCA. Don't forget that this year is an election year and things will get very interesting at all levels of government. Support the NUCA National PAC and participate in the Bidding for Benjamins program offered by NUCA of Florida to put your money to work and help us "make friends" across the political system. On July 14th, we'll be holding our Annual Scholarship Night at Maggianos. Come out and show our scholarship winners some love! The NUCA of Florida Annual Conference is back to its regular July time slot. We will be heading to the Opal Grand in Delray Beach on July 21st-23rd. Registration and the room block are open, so come join us as we tackle some major issues that we all face as an industry and enjoy some good company too! I look forward to seeing you all there! Last, but not least, the NUCA of North Florida Annual Fishing Tournament will be held on August 27th. Come on out and help me celebrate my birthday by catching a boat load of fish!

As always, please continue to support our members and associates. If there is anything I can do to help you out, please do not hesitate to give me a call.

Sincerely,

Mike

Mike Kivlin

2022 NUCA of North Florida

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June 14th

Executive Committee Meeting

3:30 pm

June 16th

Trench Safety Stand

Down Kick-off

United Rentals Trench Safety

11:30

June 20th to June 24th

Trench Safety Stand Down

July 14th

Scholarship Night

Maggiano's

July 21-23rd

NUCA of Florida Conference

Opal Grand

Delray Beach

August 27th

Fishing Tournament

St. Augustine

The Law and Your Business

The Law and Your Business – The Contractor’s Final Payment Affidavit! ***Christian Lake, Esq., Lindell Farson & Zebouni***

As has been discussed in earlier editions of the Flow, one of the most effective and essential tools a Florida contractor has to ensure it is paid for work done on a project is the right to record a claim of lien against the property. However, it is important to keep in mind that Florida has set in place a number of hurdles that must be cleared before a claim of lien can be perfected through foreclosure litigation. Failing to clear even one of those hurdles can result in you losing your lien rights or, at the very least, valuable time to enforce your lien rights. This month’s publication focuses on the final hurdle before suit can be filed to foreclose on a recorded claim of lien: the contractor’s final payment affidavit.

Section 713.06(3)(d) requires a contractor, or a subcontractor, to deliver a contractor’s final payment affidavit to the owner of the subject property at least 5 days before filing suit to foreclose on a recorded claim of lien. Failure to do so will result in the dismissal of any litigation for foreclosure of a claim of lien upon motion from the defendant.

In *A. Alexis Varela, Inc., v. Pagio*, a Florida Court of Appeals was faced with an appeal of an order dismissing the plaintiff’s foreclosure action for failure to provide the contractor’s final payment affidavit 5 days before filing suit. In that case, the plaintiff served the contractor’s final payment affidavit on the owner on May 5 and initiated suit on May 10. The county court held that, since five full days since May 5 had not yet passed on the day the foreclosure action was filed, the foreclosure portion of the complaint was to be dismissed.

The Court of Appeals reversed the trial court’s order and explained that the date of service, May 5, counted as “Day 1” and that May 9 was “Day 5” as a result. Therefore, a lawsuit initiated on May 10 complied with Section 713.06(3)(d) and the foreclosure action should not have been dismissed.

The takeaway from this case is two-fold. First, it highlights Florida courts’ strict interpretation of Florida’s lien law and the ability of courts to outright dismiss a foreclosure lawsuit for missing a deadline by even a single day. Secondly, if your company is seeking to foreclose on a claim of lien, it is essential to first serve the owner with a contractor’s final payment affidavit and to not file suit until after the fifth day from the date of service of the affidavit (not when its sent). Failure to serve the affidavit and failure to wait at least the required number of days before filing suit will result in a quick dismissal of your complaint and a potential loss of your valuable lien rights.

The standard form for a contractor’s final payment affidavit can be found within Section 713.06, Florida Statutes. However, due to the complexity and strict application of Florida’s lien law, it is highly recommended that you consult with an attorney as early as possible if you wish to keep the door open for potential lien litigation and the law offices of Lindell Farson & Zebouni, P.A. would be glad to assist you in such matters.

JUMBO SHRIMP HIGHLIGHTS

We sold over 350 tickets for our evening at the Jumbo Shrimp. The weather was beautiful with a little breeze. It was great to see so many of our members with their kids. After an all you can eat buffet, attendees watched the Jumbo Shrimp take on the Nashville Sounds. Unfortunately, the Jumbo Shrimp lost with a score of 10 to 1.



TRENCH SAFETY STAND DOWN

2022 Trench Safety Stand Down
June 20-24, 2022

Trench Safety Stand Down Week Goals

TSSD was first held in 2016 by NUCA, with OSHA joining as a partner a year later. The goal of the event is to reach out to the many workers who work in and around trenches and excavations to provide them with information about current excavation requirements and safety procedures for working in trenches. By reaching as many workers as possible we can reduce the number of fatalities and serious injuries that occur each year in our industry, and make others, such as municipal and industry workers who are also exposed, aware of these serious hazards.

Who Can Participate?

Anyone who wants to prevent trenching and excavation hazards in the workplace can participate in the Stand Down. We encourage utility construction, residential, highway construction, plumbers, military, unions, associations, educational institutes, and safety equipment manufacturers to participate.

What is a Safety Stand Down?

A Safety Stand Down presents the opportunity for employers to talk directly to employees and others about safety. These Stand Downs will focus on trench & excavation hazards and reinforce the importance of using trench protective systems and protecting workers from trenching hazards.

How to Conduct a Trench Safety Stand Down

Companies will conduct a Trench Safety Stand Down by taking a break to have a toolbox talk or another safety activity to draw attention to the specific hazards related to working in and around trenches/excavations. We ask that member companies provide to NUCA feedback about their Stand Down, such as when it was held, how many workers participated, how you shared information with employees. NUCA will collect the information, publicize the overall total number of participants, and publish the names of the companies that held a Trench Safety Stand Down. You can find all the appropriate documentation in the **TSSD Forms** on the NUCA website.

Recognition of Participation

For participants in the 2022 TSSD, NUCA will provide a ***Certificate of Participation*** which will be e-mailed to all participating companies, and helmet stickers will be physically mailed to the address provided on the form you will complete below. Please allow at least several weeks for our safety team to process your submission.

NUCA will publish the list of names of participating organizations on the NUCA website and in our printed publications after the conclusion of the event. Please feel free to send in any photos taken during your stand down to nuca@nuca.com. They may be published in our publications to encourage other companies to follow your company's lead and emphasize trench safety all year long.

TSSD 2022 Submission Form: [Submit Your 2022 Fillable Form](#) to Receive Your Helmet Stickers

If you have any questions with the online submission form please contact the NUCA office by phone #703.358.9300 or email nuca@nuca.com.



New Trenchless Technology Manual Released

Trenchless technology continues to expand at a very rapid rate, as more contractors recognize the efficiency and cost-savings that can be recognized in its usage. To help more of its members understand trenchless tech, the National Utility Contractors Association (NUCA) released this month its updated "Trenchless Construction and New Installation Methods" manual. The 148-page, full-color illustrated manual carefully addresses and explains the most common trenchless installation methods. This manual was written by construction industry experts, describing both the contractors' and manufacturers' perspective with the goal to educate and guide others in choosing the best subsurface method to completing a project. The new manual is available exclusively from NUCA, and can be ordered online for US\$99.95 plus shipping. More here: www.nuca.com/trenchlessmanual

Get Ready For Trench Safety Stand Down Week - June 20-24, 2022

June 20-24, 2022 is the sixth annual Trench Safety Stand Down (TSSD). Sponsored by NUCA National Partner United Rentals, this is your company's opportunity to talk directly to your employees and others about excavation safety. Companies can conduct a stand-down by taking a break to conduct a toolbox talk or other safety activity to draw attention to the specific hazards related to working in and around trenches/excavations. We hope each NUCA member will participate in our TSSD and June's "Trench Safety Month"! For more information and TSSD materials, [go here](#).

Take Advantage of NUCA's Virtual Safety Training Programs

NUCA's virtual training classes continue for our members, and we urge you to take advantage of them as Trench Safety Month approaches. Through National Partner [United Rentals](#), NUCA is offering our members and their employees virtual training classes for "Confined Spaces in Construction Training" and "Excavation Safety for Competent Person." These live virtual trainings can give members the opportunity to pick from multiple dates while giving them the flexibility of remote training. May-June's classes and registration can be found on the NUCA website front page under "Calendar." Please log into your NUCA membership profile [to register for the seminars](#)

NUCA's Train-the-Trainer: A New Look, A New Course, Aug. 23-26

NUCA's Safety, Education & Training Dept. is pleased to announce that the venerable NUCA Train-the-Trainer (TTT) course has a fresh new look and a new focus. The updated Train-the-Trainer course emphasizes building instructors and teaching them the concepts of being an effective instructor while focusing on teaching the core NUCA Competent Person and NUCA Confined Space Courses. The 2022 TTT course will be offered in Coppell, Texas, on Aug. 23-26. If you would like to attend this course, be a NUCA Certified Instructor, or refresh your skills and training, please contact NUCA's training director Mike Flowers at mike@nuca.com.

Your Investment in NUCA Delivers Many Benefits: Webinar-on-Demand

Are you a new member of NUCA? Or as a long-time member you're seeking a refresher on all the many benefits your annual NUCA membership investment delivers to you and your employees? Our membership department recently held a quick webinar on the growing number of benefits NUCA offers to each member, including some you may not know about. We invite you to watch our quick NUCA membership overview to make sure you're getting the most for your business. [Click here](#) to watch our YouTube video.

SAFETY NEWS

By Jeff Blomgren
Safety Director at Petticoat-Schmitt Civil Contractors

Trench Safety Stand Down June 20-24

I'm sure that everyone in our industry is gearing up for the 2022 NUCA TSSD. As an annual activity, it focuses on the hazards of what we do. There are risks in everything. You almost can't take a breath without thinking about risk. If you want a good example, sit near someone in the restaurant that's sneezing or walking down the aisle and having someone cough in the grocery store or drive near someone on their cell phone. Does that mean that you stop eating out or shopping for groceries or taking a drive? I don't think so, but it's all about recognizing the risks and taking steps to mitigate them. You become aware of the risks. It's called situational awareness. It's about knowing what's going on around you. It's about picking up on the cues that are happening and understand how to react. Too many times we lose sight of the hazards we encounter every day. We become complacent. We are satisfied with our situation and we develop a sense of false security. We dig trenches all day every day. One of the most dangerous things we do is dig holes in the ground and put people in there to do the work that makes this world a better place. It's an essential function that makes America one of the best places on earth to live but it doesn't come without risk. Our job is to make sure we are doing everything we can to minimize the risks involved in the process. The NUCA Trench Safety Stand Down is a perfect time to focus on how we do what we do best and to celebrate how well we do it. Remember, June 20-24. Let's make sure we are doing all we can to do what we do safely.



Buried Alive: Joe's Story

Buried alive. Alone. Screaming you know no one can hear. You wonder if the rescuers can get to you in time. You can't move a muscle—not even your fingers. It is tough for you to breathe. And breathing is getting more difficult with each shallow breath because the dirt is crushing you. You have been doing this type of work for years and odds were that it would never happen to you. You may be asking yourself why you didn't listen to the safety manager who told you never to go into an unprotected trench. And now as the last few minutes of your life pass you by, you think about your wife and kids, your parents and close friends and how much you would like to tell them you love them. But it is too late.

How Could This Happen?

The situation started off with someone yelling at Joe to look out because the trench was caving in, but it was too late. Joe didn't have time to turn and run before the dirt in the trench wall fell and buried him. The crew was panicking and one of the workers jumped in the trench to help even though he knew not to do that. But was too late, there was nothing he could do and yelled for help to get out of the trench before it buried him too. But as he was climbing out, the other trench wall caved in too, just missing him.

The workers called 911 and within 5 minutes the fire department's rescue team was onsite making an assessment of what needed to be done to try to save Joe. It had been about 6 minutes, and they thought Joe had probably already passed out. The rescue team couldn't use an excavator because it could tear Joe apart, so they had to dig by hand. They started to dig and shore the trench but it was a slow process. Time was critical. Firefighters from all around the county arrived to help, but they all knew situations like this are often fatal. The firemen knew that it would probably be a recovery, not a rescue, but they tried anyway.

The owner of the company arrived onsite and was very concerned about Joe. Unfortunately, it was late for him to take actions to keep Joe safe. He kept asking himself why he did not listen to his safety manager and provide a trench protective system (sloping, shoring, or shield) as required by OSHA.

Utility Contractor | March/April 2018



OSHA requires every excavation 5 ft or more in depth to be protected by

When OSHA showed up, it did not take long to figure out there was no competent person onsite and the company did not provide a trench protective system. The contractor and his company were facing huge penalties and possibly criminal charges.

Don't Let This Happen to You or Your Employees

Why would any worker take a chance of being buried? Workers should be trained and informed of the potential hazards and what they should do to protect themselves. There's no reason that construction workers should have to their place lives on the line to install a pipe or cable. OSHA has implemented regulations for a reason. Employers must follow them.

Why would a company owner not insist that workers use trench protective systems whenever entering a trench? Trench protective systems are cheap to rent for companies that don't need them every day. And if they are needed every day, the



/ a trench protective system – sloping, shoring or shielding.

company should invest in the systems they need. Companies should also train their crew leaders and foremen to be competent persons so that they know the law and what is supposed to be done to protect workers from cave ins. Workers must be trained too.

Time will tell what happens to the construction company's owner, but in the meantime Joe is dead and the company owner will have to face the family to tell them the tragic news. This is something no one ever wants to do. It could all have been prevented if one of the three S's – sloping, shoring or shielding – were used when Joe was in the trench.

Yes, this is a horrible story. But the story is real and explains what happens when a worker is buried in an unprotected trench. Even when workers are pulled from the trench collapse alive, they are seriously injured and, in many cases, will die from their injuries.

Preventing Trench Fatalities and Injuries

Did you know that most trench fatalities occur in excavations, including trenching, that are only 5- to 15-ft deep? They

often occur where there is no trained competent person assigned to oversee the work to keep it safe.

OSHA requires employers to train all their workers about trench safety. In addition, employers are required to train and assign a competent person to every job that involves workers working in and around trenches and other excavations.

OSHA requires every excavation 5 ft or more in depth to be protected by a trench protective system – sloping, shoring or shielding. In some states a protective system is required for excavations deeper than 4 ft. In any event, a trench protective system is required to protect workers. In addition, even when trenches are less than 4- or 5-ft deep a competent person must make a judgement call about whether or not it is safe to enter into the trench and then take appropriate action. If in doubt, the competent person should use a trench protective system to ensure workers are not injured or worse, killed in the trench.

Trench Safety Stand Down

JUNE 20TH TO 24TH

Every company or organization that holds a TSSD will receive a certificate of participation, as well as hard-hat stickers for every employee who participated. Recognition will also be given in NUCA publications. Please plan for your company to be a part of this vital industry safety event this year.

For more details and TSSD materials: nuca.com/tssd

Conclusion

These types of situations happen more often than you may think. Trenches cave in frequently and workers are killed or seriously injured. If companies would only take the time to train workers and spend a few dollars, they could all be prevented.

George Kennedy served as NUCA's vice president of safety.

JUNE IS TRENCH SAFETY MONTH!

Safety Training and Protective Systems Save Lives



Trench Safety Stand Down Week | June 20–24, 2022

Make plans for your company to participate in this year's NUCA Trench Safety Stand Down Week. Being a part of our popular 6th annual TSSD Week will help educate your employees on trenching hazards at the jobsite.

OSHA's National Emphasis Program on Trenching and Excavation is a high agency priority. NUCA and OSHA have teamed up again this year for our annual trench safety program. More than 22,000 employees on 2,200 jobsites from 340 companies participated in the 2021 TSSD.

Every company or organization that holds a TSSD will receive a certificate of participation, as well as hard-hat stickers for every employee who participated. Recognition will also be given in NUCA publications. Please plan for your company to be a part of this vital industry safety event this year.



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Wacker Neuson Corp.

For more details and TSSD materials: nuca.com/tssd #TSSD22 #TrenchSafetyMonth

TOOLBOX

Talks



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When Protection Against Cave-ins Is Required in Excavations

[Reference 1926 Subpart P]

Here's something for you to think about; just one cubic foot of undisturbed soil weighs at least 100 pounds, or even more if the soil has a high moisture content (refer trainees to the handout accompanying this toolbox talk for an illustration). That means that just one cubic yard of soil, which contains 27 cubic feet of material, weighs well over 2,700 pounds. That's as much as a small car weighs!

Now imagine you are working inside of a trench when some soil breaks loose from one of the sides and strikes you . . . or traps you up against the other side . . . or buries you up to your chest . . . or covers you up completely. As you can imagine, the ramifications could be disastrous. Often times the person trapped in the caved in soil suffocates, very slowly, because the weight of the soil prevents them from expanding their diaphragm and taking a breath. But other non-fatal injuries could also occur when someone gets trapped in a cave-in, such as broken bones, ruptured internal organs, and muscle damage due to blood flow being restricted by the pressure being exerted by the weight of the soil.

So hopefully the thought of being seriously injured, or even dying, in a cave-in will motivate us all to be mindful of when we are required to have some form of protection from cave-ins when we enter excavations. Can anyone tell me when a protective system is required when you enter an excavation?

Federal OSHA, as well as most State OSHA programs, requires us to utilize some form of approved protective system any time we enter any excavation that is five foot or deeper. It's really that simple, if the excavation is five or more feet deep, then we must utilize a protective system – no ifs, ands, or buts about it! (This is a good time for you to discuss if your state rules, company rules, or work site rules require a protective system at a shallower depth). And in some cases, the soil may be so unstable that the Competent Person might even have us utilize a protective system even if the excavation is less than five foot deep. But once again I will emphasize, under no circumstances are you, me, or anyone else ever allowed to enter into any excavation that is five feet or deeper unless there is some form of approved protective system in place.

Be aware that it's NOT your job to figure out what kind of protective system to use, or if it is properly built or installed; that job belongs to the Competent Person. But usually it will take one of the following forms:

- ◆ Sloped sides
- ◆ Benched, or stair-stepped, sides
- ◆ Timber shoring
- ◆ Aluminum shoring
- ◆ A trench box, shield, or other manufactured protective system

In addition to these methods of protection against cave-ins, there are others allowed, as long as they are designed or approved by a registered engineer and installed per their directions. We will discuss some attributes of all of these types of protective systems in future toolbox talks so you can better recognize them. But the take-home message of today's toolbox talk is simple; DO NOT for any reason enter any excavation that is five foot or deeper unless there is an appropriate protective system in place. And if there is any doubt, ask your Competent Person.

Does anyone have a question or comment pertaining to when a protective system is required to be in place?



Watch for Tell-tale Signs of Distressed Soil Around Excavations

[Reference 1926 Subpart P]

One of the many duties of the Competent Person for an excavation site includes checking the soil in and around the excavations for signs of distress. Signs of distress in soil mean that conditions are ripe for the soil to cave-in, and that is obviously bad news for everyone working in or near the excavation. When signs of distress are found, the Competent Person will determine whether or not it is necessary to alter the protective system that is being used to safeguard workers in the excavation. For example, an excavation with sloped or stepped sides may need to be recut to make the sides less steep.

Unfortunately, the Competent Person for an excavation site cannot be everywhere all of the time. And that is why we are now going to review just a few of the simpler signs of soil distress, so we can all be on the lookout.

The first sign to keep an eye out for are tension cracks forming on top of the ground along the sides of an excavation. They typically form back away from the edge of an excavation at a distance equal to approximately one-half to three quarters of the depth of the excavation (see handout for an illustration). Tension cracks can eventually lead to the soil along the face and edge of the excavation either sliding, sloughing, or toppling into the excavation.

Another sign of distress in soil is when a portion of the face on one or more sides of an excavation begins to bulge outwards. Bulging is often accompanied by the soil along the top edge of an excavation appearing to sink or slump to a level lower than the surrounding soil; this is a condition referred to as subsidence (see handout for an illustration). Both bulging and subsidence can lead to a catastrophic cave-in of the soil along the affected side of an excavation.

One more sign of distressed soil to watch out for is "heaving" (see handout for illustration). This condition occurs when the soil at the floor of the excavation appears to rise up and is attributed to soil at the bottom of an excavation being pushed up by the weight of heavier amounts of soil on the sides and top. It is important to note that this condition can occur even when there is a trench box or shoring installed in an excavation and can possibly lead to loose soil entering into the protected area. So, this condition must be addressed by the Competent Person when found.

While these are not the only signs of distress in soil that indicate a potential safety hazard, they are some of the more common ones to keep an eye out for. And if you notice one or more of them while working in or near an excavation, alert your Competent Person so he or she can take a look and evaluate if any corrective measures will be necessary or not.

Does anyone have a question or comment pertaining to the signs of distressed soil in or near an excavation? Has anyone ever noticed any of these before?



Basic Excavation Safety – Safety Tips When Using Trench Boxes

[Reference 1926 Subpart P]

Trench boxes, also referred to as trench shields, are becoming increasingly common on excavation sites. This can be attributed in part to their relative ease of installation and use when compared to building a timber shoring system or other forms of protective system. But there are a few things to keep in mind when we are utilizing a trench box as our protective system, such as:

- ◆ Never enter a trench box until you are certain the Competent Person has cleared it for entry.
- ◆ Do not stand underneath, inside of, or next to a trench box that is being installed, removed, or moved vertically. The movement of the trench box can cause the soil on the sides of a trench to shift and cave in. In addition, you could be struck or crushed by the trench box as it is moved. So relocate to another protected area of the trench as the trench box is being moved, or get completely out of the trench and stand in a safe place.
- ◆ Never walk out of a trench box into an unprotected area of a trench for any reason, even if it is just for a few seconds. A cave-in can happen in a split second with little or no warning of what is about to occur.
- ◆ Always use a portable ladder or other approved means to enter and exit the trench box. Do not climb up and down the spreader pipes. When using a portable ladder to enter or exit the trench, make certain it is located inside of the trench box or other protected area of the trench. In addition, secure the ladder against unintentional displacement, and make sure the side rails extend at least three feet above the top of the ground or other landing surface so you have something to grab when getting on and off of the ladder.
- ◆ Be on the lookout for any missing parts or damage that may occur to trench boxes. Broken welds, bent spreader pipes, and missing retainer pins are but a few of the things that need to be reported as quickly as possible so they can be evaluated by the Competent Person and corrected when necessary.
- ◆ Also report other conditions that may affect the safe function of trench boxes. For example, the top of a trench box must be at least as high as the top of the trench to offer full protection for workers inside; so be on the lookout for situations where the trench box has settled in the soil and the top of the trench box drops below ground level.
- ◆ Federal OSHA standards and many trench box manufacturers do allow excavation of soil up to two feet below the bottom of a trench box, but only in certain conditions. So do not excavate soil to a level below the bottom of a trench box without first confirming with the Competent Person it is safe to do so; and if so, confirm how deep you can dig.

These are just a few tips for working safely in and around trench boxes. Can anyone think of any other tips that are pertinent to trench box safety?

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Basic Excavation Safety – Safety Tips for Sloped & Benched Excavations

[Reference 1926 Subpart P]

Sloping or benching the walls of an excavation can help prevent cave-ins IF they are cut to the required slope and angle. So never enter an excavation, even if the walls appear to you to be adequately sloped or benched, unless the Competent Person has cleared the excavation for entry. In addition, here are a few more safety tips to keep in mind when working in or near sloped or benched excavations:

- ◆ You don't want something falling or rolling down into the excavation and striking someone. So always make certain that materials and equipment located outside of sloped or benched excavations are kept at least two feet or more away from the edges. And if necessary, use stakes, wedges, or chocks to secure rolling objects such as pipes or wheeled equipment in place and keep them from accidentally rolling or getting knocked into the excavation;
- ◆ Before you enter a sloped or benched excavation, as well as during the time you are inside the excavation, take a moment to check the soil along the top edges and sides of the excavation for signs of distress. This includes the formation of fissures or cracks forming parallel to one or more of the top edges of the excavation, bulging of the vertical face of the lower portions of the excavation, sloughing or spalling of the soil from the vertical faces of the excavation, and small amounts of material such as pebbles or little clumps of material suddenly separating from the face of an excavation and trickling or rolling down into the excavation (a condition called raveling). Report any signs of distress to the Competent Person so they can inspect the excavation and address any hazardous conditions if necessary.
- ◆ Avoid climbing up or down the sides of sloped or benched excavations to enter or exit unless you have been cleared to do so by the Competent Person. Even though they may appear to be safe to climb, the angles and steps of sloped and benched excavation walls are usually too steep for a person to walk on safely, and that can lead to you stumbling and falling. So unless the Competent Person confirms that the slopes or steps have been designed and constructed at angles and dimensions acceptable for walking up and down, only enter and exit excavations through means approved by the Competent Person. This includes means such as a properly installed portable ladder or properly constructed ramp designed by a Competent Person. One last thing; when working in trench excavations that are 4 feet or more in depth, always make sure your ladder, ramp, or other means of exiting the trench are located so as to require no more than 25 feet of lateral travel;
- ◆ Do NOT work on the sides of sloped or benched excavations at levels above other persons, unless measures approved by the Competent Person are installed. Examples include safety barricades or shields that ensure the people below are protected from hazards created by dropped tools, sliding or falling materials or equipment, or even falling people.

These are just a few tips for working safely in and around excavations with walls that are sloped or benched. Can anyone think of any other tips that are pertinent working in sloped or benched excavations?

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