



SITE SAFETY MEETING - TOOL BOX TALK

Basic Excavation & Trench Safety

Excavation work can be dangerous to anyone who has access to the jobsite and especially those not trained or familiar with this type of work. It is important to provide the necessary safeguards to protect not only those working in the excavation but other jobsite workers, visitors, and the general public. Only workers that are involved directly with the work should be allowed in the excavation area. The exposure to accident or injury is always there whether you are above ground or actually performing the work in the trench.

Protect the areas around trenches and open excavations from pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Provide barriers, flagmen, signs, or what ever is needed to ensure a hazard free work site. This responsibility does not end at the end of the day but safety precautions must be provided through the off hours and weekends to protect curious children and others that could visit the jobsite.

Some Excavation Safety Guidelines:

- Plan your work with safety in mind, have the proper equipment available, anticipate potential problems and always **“Call Before You Dig”** to locate existing utilities in your work area.
- Have the **Competent Person** on your job inspect and monitor soil conditions. A Competent Person is someone who is trained in identifying soil types and the hazards of trench and excavation work as well as the use of protective systems. All excavations by regulation, must be inspected and monitored by a company assigned Competent Person to provide for the safety of those working in and around excavations.
- Trenches over 5 feet in depth must be protected by shoring, benching or properly sloped before workers are allowed access the trench. Also, keep in mind that shallow trenches, less than 5’ deep can be as dangerous a 10’ deep trench when working close to the bottom.
- The type of protective system used for trenches over 5’ deep will depend the type of soil and the stability of soil you’re working in. The assigned Competent Person on your crew will analyze the soil and see that the right protection is used. Common protective systems include sloping, benching, shoring boxes, sheeting, etc.
- When in any excavation you must be able to get out easily. An unobstructed ramp or ladder must be within 25 ‘of you at all times when in an excavation or trench.
- Keep excavated materials, tools and supplies 24” or more from the top edge of excavations.
- When in doubt of the safety of a trench or excavation ask your supervisor before you enter.
- Adequately protect the excavation area from others while you work and before leaving the site.

Some workers think they can “out run” a cave-in or if someone is “watching” the trench walls while they work there will be enough warning to get out of the way of a trench collapse. The reality is nobody can move that fast and chances are you will be buried before you have time to react. Don’t

fool yourself, a cubic yard of earth weighs over 2,000 pounds and if it falls on you it will likely be fatal. Always remember accidents happen when you least expect it.

There are OSHA Regulations that help avoid accidents, become familiar with them and put them into practice. Working together to protect against trench hazards is the kind of cooperation that will help keep us all safe.

Questions to start discussion:

1. What type of planning should you do before you dig?
2. Who should have access to the excavation area and how would you protect others from the hazards?
3. What is a "Competent Person"? Who is the competent person on our job?
4. How deep can you go before a protective system has to be used?
5. What types of protective systems are there?
6. How far back should the materials or spoils pile be from the edge of the trench?
7. How can a 5' trench be just as dangerous as a 10' foot trench?
8. How deep can you go before you need a ladder or ramp to exit the excavation?

Material Source: National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) (3-8-06)

Meeting Notes:

Employee Comments / Concerns: _____

Other Safety issues to be addressed on the job: _____

Training Record: Date: _____ Jobsite: _____ By: _____ Title: _____

Employee Name	Emp #	Signature	Employee Name	Emp #	Signature
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Tool Box Talks are employee safety meetings designed to serve as 15 minute on-site training sessions focused on key topics relative to your work. Site superintendents or foremen are responsible for holding meetings each week usually during a morning break. This important segment of your general safety program encourages open discussion on the topic of the week and allows employees to share their experiences about accidents and safe or unsafe work practices. Recordkeeping is mandatory and all involved must sign off on each session.

Topics for your company could include: electrical safety, excavation and trenching safety, fall protection, scaffold safety, stairway and ladder safety, hazard communication, fire safety, personal protective equipment, tool safety, materials handling, etc.

Sample Tool Box Talks are provided compliments of the Safety Committee of **the Hartford County Homebuilders Association** in cooperation with the credited source of this Tool Box Talk.

Tool Box Safety Talks can be purchased from the National Association of Homebuilders 1-800 368-5242, www.nahb.com or may be available through your business insurance provider. For more information on Tool Box Talks contact the HBA office 860 563-4212.

BUILD SAFELY – THINK SAFETY