State of Hawaii
Dept. of Labor & Industrial Relations
HIOSH
Hawaii Occupational Safety & Health

HAZARD HIGHLIGHT

August 2019 Vol. 3

Trenching and Excavation Safety

On May 31, 2019, HIOSH adopted the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) National Emphasis Program (NEP) on Trenching and Excavation.

Under the NEP, HIOSH Inspectors will initiate inspections whenever they observe an open trench or an open excavation, regardless of whether violations are readily observed. Inspections based on this NEP will begin **September 1, 2019.**

KEEP TRENCHES SAFE FOR WORKERS

• PREPARE a **safe trench.**
  − Provide safe entry and exit before starting work.
  − Keep materials at least 2 feet away from the edge.

• PROTECT workers from a cave-in by using **protective systems**.
  − Sloping or benching trench walls, or
  − Shoring trench wall with supports, or
  − Shielding trench walls with trench boxes.

• INSPECT the trench for **hazards.**
  − Look for standing water and other environmental hazards.
  − Never enter a trench unless it has been inspected and approved by the competent person.

ACCESS AND EGRESS
OSHA requires safe access and egress to all excavations, including ladders, steps, ramps, or other safe means of exit for employees working in trench excavations 4 feet (1.22 meters) or deeper.

These devices must be located within 25 feet (7.6 meters) of all workers. 1926.651(c)(2) Means of egress from trench excavations. A stairway, ladder, ramp or other safe means of egress shall be located in trench excavations that are 4 feet (1.22 m) or more in depth so as to require no more than 25 feet (7.62 m) of lateral travel for employees.

FINAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT
All excavations must be backfilled as soon as possible after removal of the support system. No worker is permitted in an unshored or unprotected excavation or trench no matter how compelling the reason.

Did you know?

About half of the people killed each year in trenches die trying to rescue someone else who has been buried by a cave-in.

Call 911 for help. Do not attempt a rescue, unless you have been properly trained in trench-rescue techniques.

Source: NUCA

CONSULTATION & TRAINING
(808) 586-9100
http://labor.hawaii.gov/hiosh

www.osha.gov/trenching

If you would like to read the full HIOSH directive, find it here:
www.labor.hawaii.gov/hiosh/guidelines/directives/

For more information, please contact HIOSH at:
dlir.hiosh@hawaii.gov or 808-586-9100