

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral fiber that has commonly been used in a variety of building materials for insulation, and as a fire-retardant. Asbestos has been linked to certain cancers and respiratory diseases.

While the Environmental Protection Agency and the Consumer Product Safety Commission have banned the use of asbestos, and manufacturers have voluntarily limited its use, Asbestos may still be found in older buildings. According to the Occupational Health and Safety Administration, an estimated 1.3 million employees in construction and general industry face significant asbestos exposure on the job. The risk is particularly great during maintenance, remodeling, renovation, or demolition. Asbestos fibers are naturally occurring and stay airborne very well, which may pose a significant risk to you on the job site.

Where do you find asbestos?

Asbestos differs from other minerals, in that it forms long thin fibers instead of crystals. Asbestos is used in many products because of its high tensile strength, flexibility, and resistance to chemical and thermal breakdown. Asbestos is used in insulation, fireproofing materials, automotive brakes, cement and wallboard materials, floor tiles, and roofing materials.

How can you become exposed?

Improper attempts to remove these materials can release asbestos fibers into the air, increasing asbestos levels and endangering people nearby. Asbestos is only dangerous if it becomes airborne. To be a significant health concern, asbestos fibers must be inhaled over an extended period of time. Asbestos fibers then accumulate in the lungs. As exposure increases, so does the risk of asbestos-related diseases. As long as asbestos-containing materials are not damaged, the asbestos fibers do not become airborne and do not pose a health threat.

Asbestos-Related Diseases

Asbestosis is a scarring of the lung tissue. The scarring affects the elasticity of the lungs, and lowers its ability to transfer oxygen and carbon dioxide. Asbestosis is a slowly progressive disease, taking 15 to 30 years to fully develop.

Mesothelioma is a type of cancer. This disease attacks the lining of the space holding the lungs, called the pleura. Mesothelioma is considered to be exclusively related to asbestos exposure, and it may take 30 to 40 years to develop.

Lung cancer is a malignant tumor in the lungs. The tumor grows through the surrounding tissues, invading and blocking the air passages of the lungs. The time between exposure to asbestos and the occurrence of lung cancer may take 20 to 30 years. It should be noted that there is a multiplying effect between smoking and asbestos exposure, which creates a high susceptibility to lung cancer.

How can you protect yourself?

Before you disturb asbestos (loosen the fibers), you must have special training. OSHA requires a "competent person" to be designated for all work sites that will involve asbestos work. The competent person should inspect the job site regularly, be knowledgeable of personal protective equipment, and supervise the work to be done to ensure all safety measures are being taken to prevent exposure to asbestos.

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Back Injuries: The #1 Workplace Safety Problem

Preventing back injuries is a major workplace safety challenge. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than one million workers suffer back injuries each year, and back injuries account for one of every five workplace injuries or illnesses. Further, one-fourth of all compensation indemnity claims involve back injuries, costing businesses billions of dollars, on top of the pain and suffering experienced by employees.

Although lifting, placing, carrying, holding, and lowering are all involved in manual materials handling (the principal cause of compensable work injuries), the BLS survey shows that four out of five of these injuries were to the lower back, and that three out of four occurred while the employee was lifting.

No approach has been found for totally eliminating back injuries caused by lifting, but most agree that a substantial portion can be prevented through an effective control program and ergonomic design of work tasks. In one study it was determined that at least one-third of compensable back injuries could be prevented through better ergonomics.

Other factors include frequency of lifting, duration of lifting activities, and type of lifting, as well as individual variables such as age, sex, body size, state of health, and general physical fitness.

In the workplace, here are some things to remember before doing any lifting:

- Don't bend over the object you're lifting. Bend your knees, and squat in front of the object to reach it.
- Lift the object slowly and carefully, using your leg and arm muscles to lift; don't pull with your back.
- Keep your head up and look straight ahead while making the lift.
- Keep the object as close to your body as possible while lifting.
- Keep abdominal muscles tight while making the lift.
- Use the same techniques when you put the object down.
- If the object is too big or too heavy to lift using these techniques, use mechanical assistance, or get someone else to help.

Exercise also plays an important role in keeping your back strong, healthy, and flexible. A properly exercised back is less likely to be injured. Your physician, company medical personnel, or other health care provider can recommend the best exercises for you, taking into account your physical condition and the type of work you do.

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Extension Cord Safety

Extension cords are designed to be conveniences, not hazards. But too often the people who use them convert them into hazards. Let's go over some of the ways these safety hazards come about.

One of the more common hazards comes from extension cords being placed in areas where people aren't used to having them around, resulting in a tripping hazard. When using an extension cord, try to keep it out of aisles and other places where pedestrians might trip over it. When someone trips over a cord, there is not only a chance of injury, but the plug may be jerked to the extent that it's damaged, making it an electrical hazard.

Selecting the right extension cord for the job can eliminate many hazards to start with. All cords should be UL listed, properly grounded, and meet other applicable electrical code specifications. If you're using portable electrical equipment, the equipment should be properly grounded.

If moisture, heat, or chemicals are present, be sure your cord is the proper type to resist those conditions. A word of caution: if you make a good connection with a live wire carrying even 110 volts, it can be fatal. Wet or sweaty hands make a dangerous connection when they are in contact with a good ground like a wet surface.

Much of the strain on current-carrying parts of extension cords can be prevented by using heavy-duty plugs, which are clamped to the cord. This is particularly helpful in cases where the cord is accidentally pulled or jerked. It is important to inspect extension cords often and, if they are damaged, do not use them.

Remember: Electricity kills. Use it wisely.

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Working Safely with Ladders

Ladders are one of the biggest hazards of overhead work, and they result in many accidents. Here we cover certain rules to be followed in the selection, use, and care of ladders.

To start, always inspect a ladder before using it. Look for:

1. Loose rungs or cleats
2. Loose nails, bolts, or screws
3. Cracked, broken, split, badly gouged or worn rungs, cleats, or railings
4. Splinters or splinters

You should always select a ladder that is long enough for the work to be done. As a rule of thumb, the ladder should be long enough so that you can work standing no higher than the fourth rung from the top. This allows you to grasp the side rails of the ladder.

The top of the ladder should never extend more than three or four feet above its upper support. Never step on a rung above the upper support, since it's liable to make the base of the ladder "kick out."

When climbing or coming down a ladder, always face the ladder, and keep both hands free for gripping the side rails.

Wall grips on the tops of risers are useful to prevent side slipping when the ladder's leaning against a smooth surface. The top and bottom of the ladder should be secured to prevent shifting. Safety feet, cleats, or lashing can be used to make portable ladders secure.

When placing the ladder, make sure you don't rest it against a sash or window pane. A board securely fastened (not nailed) across the top of the ladder will provide a solid bearing at each side of the window.

If you must rest a ladder against a pole or round column, be sure the upper end of the ladder is firm so it won't slip or cause the ladder to fall. When ladders are used this way, they are less likely to sway or fall if the upper end is equipped with a rung of webbing or similar material.

When carrying a ladder, balance it on your shoulder near the center. Keep the front end of the ladder high enough to clear the top of anyone's head, and the back end close to the ground. Be extra careful and keep your mind on where the ladder is in relation to the people and objects around you as you carry it. Pay particular attention when you approach passageways and doorways, or any place where your view is obstructed.

NEVER stand a ladder on a box or barrel or any other makeshift objects to increase its reach. In other words, ALWAYS use a ladder that is the correct height for the work at hand. If you don't have a ladder that is long enough, get one. If you must borrow a ladder, be sure to thoroughly inspect it and make sure it is safe.

Before climbing a ladder, make sure it is at the proper angle. The recommended angle is about 75 degrees from horizontal. If the base is out too far, the stress on the side rails is more severe, and the wider angle can cause slippage. If the horizontal distance is much less than one-fourth of the incline length of the ladder, it is pitched too steeply for safe work.

Store your ladders in dry, well-ventilated locations where they are not exposed to the weather, excessive heat, or dampness. When stored horizontally, support both ends and at in-between points to keep the middle from sagging, which can loosen the rungs or cleats and warp the rails.

Treat wood ladders periodically with a clear preservative like clear varnish, white shellac, or linseed oil. Never paint a ladder, as this hides defects and deterioration.

Ladders are necessary and useful tools. Be sure to use yours safely, and take care of them when not in use so that they remain useful and SAFE.

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The Value of Sight

Of all five of your senses -- sight, sound, smell, touch, or taste -- which one is your favorite? If you could only keep one, which would it be? It may sound like a ridiculous question, but the overwhelming majority of people will say that sight is their most important sense. And modern science tends to agree. In fact, 80% of everything we know comes to us through our sight. So if that's the case, why wouldn't we do everything we could to protect our eyes?

Imagine that your eye is like a camera -- the most valuable camera you've ever owned. A camera consists primarily of a lens, usually rather expensive. This lens gathers light rays, focuses them, and forms an image on a sensitized film, thus mechanically creating a picture.

The eye, too, has a very valuable lens. The eye consists of the retina, iris, cornea, and optic nerve. These five tiny organs in your body, in an almost supernatural fashion, coordinate their activities to transmit impulses to the brain. These impulses are read by your brain, which you interpret as vision -- the miracle of color, perception, and the ability to learn.

But as miraculous as our eyes are, they are also incredibly sensitive, and must be treated with great care. Unfortunately, many people in the construction industry, one of the most dangerous industries for your eyes to be exposed to, still don't protect their eyes as they should. Consider one worker who lost his sight when a grinding wheel exploded. Of course, he was wearing his safety goggles; the problem was that they were on his forehead. Ironically, this man was a devoted photographer who treated the lenses of his many valuable cameras with the ultimate care. Each lens was well-protected with a leather cover, to avoid the slightest scratch or piece of lint. Yet he managed to lose his most valuable piece of equipment, rendering his cameras useless.

You only have two eyes. ALWAYS wear your safety goggles.

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Flammable Liquid Safety

Flammable liquids are used widely in many workplace and home situations, in many different ways. They present unique hazards to the people that use them. Flammable liquids can cause a fire or explosion, and overexposure to them may also cause serious health effects. Here we'll discuss how to safely use flammable liquids and avoid hazards.

Flammable liquids are liquids with a flash point of less than 100°F. The flash point is the lowest temperature at which a liquid gives off enough vapor to form a flammable mixture with air. On the National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA) diamond label, a fire hazard rating of 3 or 4 denotes a flammable liquid. Other labels used to identify flammable liquids are red with appropriate wording, and they usually contain a fire symbol.

The vapors of a flammable liquid often present the most serious hazard. The vapors can easily ignite or explode. Because these vapors are heavier than air, they may settle in low spots, or move a significant distance from the liquid itself.

The explosive concentration of vapors in air has a lower and upper limit. The lower explosive limit, or LEL, is the lowest concentration that will ignite. The upper explosive limit, or UEL, is the highest concentration that will ignite. If the vapor concentration is between the LEL and UEL, there is serious risk of fire or explosion.

To minimize the risk of ignition of the flammable liquid or vapors, follow these precautions:

- Always check the MSDS for the material you're using, to understand the specific hazards involved.
- Store flammable liquids in cool, well-ventilated areas away from corrosives, oxidizers, and ignition sources.
- Label all containers and cabinets with appropriate "flammable materials" signs.
- Never smoke in an area where flammable liquids are used or stored.
- Minimize the amount of flammable liquids used.
- Use only approved safety cans to store flammable liquids.
- Ground and bond flammable liquid containers to prevent static charge buildup.
- Never pour flammable liquids down a drain or sink.
- Dispose of empty flammable containers in an approved manner.
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment, such as splash aprons and goggles, when handling flammable liquids.

Overexposure to flammable liquids also presents health hazards. The MSDS for the material you're using will list the allowable exposures. Overexposure to flammable liquids can cause a variety of effects:

Inhalation of flammable liquids can cause irritation to the respiratory passages, nausea, headaches, muscle weakness, drowsiness, loss of coordination, disorientation, confusion, unconsciousness, and death.

Skin contact with flammable liquids can cause the skin's oils to be removed, resulting in irritated, cracked, dry skin, rashes, and dermatitis.

Eye contact with flammable liquids can cause burning, irritation, and eye damage.

Ingestion of flammable liquids can irritate the digestive tract, or even cause poisoning or death.

Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) can help prevent exposure to flammable liquids. Use PPE faithfully to protect your good health.

Careless mistakes and safety shortcuts lead to serious problems when it comes to flammable liquids. Their hazards are deadly. You can prevent problems from occurring by using your good sense, following today's tips, and observing MSDS precautions.

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Take Responsibility

The responsibility for your personal safety lies with you, and with every person on a job site. Whether you choose to accept and exercise that responsibility may determine whether you or someone else is injured. That responsibility entails making good choices, making others accountable, setting a good example, and being ready to accept the consequences of bad choices.

By accepting and practicing responsibility for work safety, you ensure your future both at home and on the job, and you do the same for your fellow worker as well. Be responsible by observing these practices:

- If you see an unsafe act, do something about it -- point it out so that others are aware and can avoid future mistakes.
- Use good work habits. Don't be impulsive, and remember that hurrying can hurt.
- Develop the following attitude: "if I do something wrong, I'm taking the chance of getting hurt." Then do the job the right way.
- If you are a supervisor, help new employees learn that safety is the rule, not the exception. Teach them proper safety responsibility before you turn them loose.
- Leave personal problems and emotional stress at home -- don't bring them to work.

Remember, accidents don't just happen - they are caused. Correct little mistakes before they grow into permanent bad habits. Safety responsibility is up to you.

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You've probably heard the term "ergonomics" before. It's a relatively new field of study concerning how a person interacts with the working environment. While ergonomics is a broad field, the basic goal of an ergonomics program is injury prevention, which is accomplished by fitting the job to the worker instead of fitting the worker to the job. This week we take a look at ergonomic concerns in the workplace, and what you can do to prevent injuries caused by poor ergonomics. Many of these suggestions can be adapted for use outside the workplace, helping you to prevent injuries at home.

Injuries arising from poor ergonomic conditions typically involve the bones, muscles, joints, tendons, and nerves. Symptoms of these injuries are:

- painful joints
- pain, tingling, or numbness in hands or feet
- pain in wrists, shoulders, forearms, knees, etc.
- back or neck pain
- fingers or toes turning white
- shooting or stabbing pains in arms or legs
- swelling or inflammation
- stiffness
- weakness or clumsiness in hands
- burning sensations
- heaviness

These symptoms could also be the result of other medical conditions, so check with your doctor if you are concerned about any of these.

The good news is that ergonomic problems can usually be solved by simple, common sense solutions. Injuries caused by awkward posture can be prevented by improving your position while you work. Any time you must twist your body, work overhead, kneel, bend over, or squat, you increase your risk of an injury. Repetition of these movements further increases this chance.

Occasional awkward posture is probably no cause for alarm, but if you find yourself repeatedly bending, stretching, and twisting, making some simple adjustments to the work environment can solve the problem of awkward posture. Your workstation may need some adjustment, or the materials you use in performing your job may need to be rearranged to eliminate these awkward movements. Store frequently used materials in front of you at waist height. Heavier objects should not be placed overhead, but they don't have to be on the floor, either. Place them at a level that makes them easier to lift. Use of mechanical lifting equipment may also be helpful.

Repetitive motion tasks can also lead to injuries. If your job requires you to make the same motions repeatedly, consider learning the correct posture for the job. Check with your company's safety department for ideas on reducing injury from repetitive motion tasks. You may find that there is equipment available to use that will reduce your chance of injury. However, don't depend only on a back or wrist brace to protect you. Your best prevention is to maintain the correct position for the task, take recommended breaks, and do any recommended exercises to help prevent injury.

Some other causes of ergonomic injuries are:

- sustained muscle exertion, which reduces blood flow to the muscles and causes muscle strains and sprains
- contact stresses, which are injuries that occur due to repeated contact with a hard surface
- extreme temperature, which can reduce sensitivity to pain and reduce blood flow
- vibration, which can reduce blood flow and sensory response

In some of these cases it may not be possible to make a simple adjustment to overcome the problem. Engineered controls may be the best solution, so check with your safety department. There are factors within your control, however. Sometimes you may be tempted to use your body itself as a tool. Have you ever used your hand or foot to pound or kick an object? Have you ever taken a shortcut and neglected to use the right piece of equipment to do the job? You may have substituted your hands for a vise, your knee for a ram, or your back for a hand truck. All of these situations put you at risk of an injury. That shortcut could cost you a lot of time and unnecessary suffering. Think twice before you use your body as a tool.

Being aware of the causes of injuries is the first step in preventing them. As you work, take a look around you for situations that could cause an injury, and take steps to correct them. Fitting the job to the person is not a difficult thing to do, and it will help keep you working injury-free for a long time to come!

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Observing Safe Sawing Practices

Circular saws, reciprocating saws, and band saws all have one thing in common -- a sharp blade. If you're not careful, you could lose a finger, a limb, or worse. The following are a few ideas that will help you prevent a serious injury.

All saws, whether they are portable or stationary, must **have their blades replaced regularly**. Make sure the power source is disconnected before changing the blades. This is especially true for table saws that have a 240 volt power supply. The push button station triggers a relay, which in turn starts the motor. Relays have been known to go bad. Disconnect the main power source and lock it out every time you perform any maintenance on a saw -- especially while changing the blade.

Always use a sharp blade! Sharp blades cut better and they require less force, which avoids putting body parts in harm's way.

Avoid cutting wet wood whenever possible. Wet wood has a tendency to warp as you cut it. Pinching the blade can cause a kick back. If you have to cut wet wood with a skill saw, place a wedge in the kerf to prevent a binding situation. Use spreaders and kick back dogs when performing ripping operations with table saws, especially if the wood is damp.

Keep the guards in place! Skill saws equipped with a proper guard during a kick back will still travel approximately a foot backward before the guard is closed. Never place your hands or body parts behind any skill saw in use. Not all guards for table saws are created equal. The types that are suspended over the table are much easier to work and least likely to interfere with operations.

Keep table saw tops clean and waxed. This helps to run your work through smoothly. Never use a miter gauge at the same time you are using a rip fence. The margin for error is too slim, and any binding will cause a kick back.

When making a very narrow cut with a table saw, put the fence on the other side of the blade. This will avoid a binding situation, and give you more room to work. If you must make multiple narrow cuts, make a jig that you can push through the saw blade, and use feather edges to hold work.

Wedging guards on skill saws are a bad idea. Using sharp blades, ensuring the guard is working properly, adjusting the depth of cut, and securing the work are much safer methods of operation. Protect your body by using safe sawing practices.

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Sometimes it's hard not to get frustrated when you're driving. We work a long hard day, we're anxious to get home, and you're forced to drive in traffic. Then someone cuts you off, won't let you merge into traffic, or makes an obscene gesture at you because they're frustrated too. We see road rage all the time, and perhaps we don't take it as seriously as we should. We might even laugh about it later when we're at home. But traffic accidents are one of the leading causes of death in this country -- road rage is no laughing matter.

Why is this? Behavior experts indicate that the stresses of everyday life—both on and off the job—have for many people become so intense that it leads to road rage as a coping mechanism. The thought process goes a little something like this:

"My boss treats me unfairly; I'm doing more work for little, if any, money—and could even lose my job at any time; I'm not getting the attention and support I need from my boyfriend/girlfriend/husband/wife/friends; prices and taxes are getting way out of hand. But by when I'm in my car, I'm in charge. Nobody's going to push me around here. So if you know what's good for you, you'll stay out of my way!"

You might be laughing now, but that's because it's probably true. And on the road, it's anything but funny.

What should you do when you encounter this kind of attitude on the road, either in another driver or, for that matter, in yourself? First of all, make a sincere effort to refocus your mind. Ask yourself whether your true goal is to win some kind of competition with the other drivers on the road, to get where you're going a little faster, or to reach your destination in one piece.

Let's assume you've chosen the correct answer, and you wish to arrive in one piece. Now what? Now concentrate on not allowing the situation to escalate. Don't let your own anger, or that of the other driver, put your safety at risk. Patiently remind yourself that the more courteous driver (you) is the better driver. Yield the right-of-way, even to someone who shouldn't have it. Then congratulate yourself on having been wise enough to avoid a confrontation in what could very likely have been a dangerous situation.

Of course, it's easier to say this now than when you're actually in that situation. But it's well worth the effort to increase your odds of a safe trip and have peace of mind. By using mature, sound judgment, you can remind yourself that you were the better driver in that situation, and meanwhile, you'll actually have avoided increasing your own level of stress. "Road rage" is like a contagious disease. Protect yourself from it with daily doses of common sense and safety consciousness, and by steering clear of any other "raging" drivers you see on the road with you.

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Look and Live

Most accidents happen because people just didn't watch what they were doing, where they were walking, or where they were standing, sitting, or climbing. Paying attention and "looking" are the most important, and most basic, principles of accident prevention.

We've all heard of the painter who stepped back to admire his work and fell five floors from his scaffolding. It's all right to admire your own work, but it's really important to look before you step in *any* direction. You could be stepping into an open stairwell, off the edge of a platform, onto a pile of lumber, into the path of a moving vehicle, or into the way of a swinging load.

On construction projects, materials and equipment are always being handled and moved about. All those working on the job must be alert to all such movements. Look up, look down, look all around, so you'll never walk into the path of a moving truck, an earth-moving machine, an elevator or some other kind of hoisting equipment.

Unique to construction projects is the fact that scrap material and debris is removed from the structure by throwing or dropping it to the ground. These materials should never be thrown from a structure unless the person doing the throwing first looks to see that no one's in the way. Both in manufacturing plants and on construction sites, material and equipment is moved about by cranes and hoists. No one should walk beneath a swinging load if there's any way to prevent it. If it becomes essential to do so, be certain to look first. Being alert to what is going on overhead is highly important to all workers, and one of the best ways to keep alert to overhead conditions is to look up occasionally.

Falls are not unique to construction projects, but many people have been killed on construction jobs as a result of falling through false ceilings or temporary floor covering, simply because they didn't take time to look where they were stepping. Others have been injured by working in poorly lighted areas, merely because they couldn't see. So, if you work in a poorly lighted place, make a *special* effort to see.

At work, your eyes are your biggest assets; take care of them so they'll take care of you. When grinding, sawing, welding, or doing any type of work of that sort, wear the proper kind of eye protection so that you will always have eyes to look with. And always watch what you are doing. If you keep your mind and your eyes on what you are doing and where you are, you will never have to explain an accident by saying, "I didn't see," when what you really meant was, "I wasn't looking."

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Trenching Safety

A trench is defined as a narrow channel that is deeper than it is wide, made below the surface of the ground. A trench can be up to 15 feet wide. An excavation is any man-made hole or trench that is made by removing earth. Trenching is recognized as one of the most hazardous construction activities. The greatest risk is a cave-in.

Each year trenching cave-ins result in more than 5,000 serious injuries and 100 deaths in the United States. Trenches are needed for the installation and repair of utility lines, water and sewer lines, television cable, building roads, and many other uses. Anyone whose work requires them to work in or around a trench should be aware of the hazards, so that they neither cause nor become involved in an accident.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires a competent person to inspect trenches on a daily basis for possible cave-ins, failures of protective systems and equipment, hazardous atmospheres, or other hazardous conditions. Visit the OSHA web site for a list of requirements for a "competent person."

Soil, or any material removed from the ground to form a trench or hole, can weigh more than 100 pounds per cubic foot. Most soil is thought of in terms of cubic yards. One cubic yard of soil may weigh more than 2700 pounds. OSHA classifies soil into four groups: solid rock, Type A, Type B, and Type C. Solid rock is the most stable, with Type C soil being the least stable. If you are unsure of the soil type, always assume it is Type C. Soil removed from a trench must be kept at least 2 feet back from the edge of the trench.

Safety Hazards:

Cave-ins can be caused by:

- Vibration of nearby construction equipment or vehicle traffic.
- Weight of equipment that is too close to the edge of the trench.
- Soils that do not hold tightly together.
- Soil that has been dug in before, which is not as stable as undisturbed earth.
- Water weakening the strength of the trench sides.

Hazardous atmospheres may be generated, as toxic gases may be released by the digging, or accumulate in the bottom of the trench.

All underground utilities must be located before any digging begins.

Protective systems are methods that protect workers from cave-ins of material that can fall or roll into an excavation/trench, or from the collapse of nearby soil structures. Protective systems include shoring, sheeting, shielding, sloping, and benching. For trenches between 5 feet and 20 feet deep, protective measures must be taken. It is up to the planners of the construction project and the competent person on site to determine which systems will work best. If an excavation is greater than 20 feet deep, a registered professional engineer must design the protective system.

Trenches deeper than 4 feet must be provided with a way to get in and out (access and egress), usually a ladder, for every 25 feet of horizontal travel within the trench.

Even a small trenching job can present serious safety hazards. The key to preventing this type of accident is good planning.

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Safety and Saving Time

We all know that wasted time on any construction project often equals wasted money. So it goes without saying that the key to a profitable project is getting it done on time or within budget. But getting the project done more quickly does NOT mean getting it done in a manner that is not safe. To ensure that time is best utilized, and that the job site remains safe, use the following time-saving tips:

1. Keep an orderly work site. Assign one or two people the responsibility of keeping the job site clean, so that workers don't have to climb or walk around construction materials and waste. Make it an ongoing process, and don't leave the mess to clean up at the end of the day, because it won't get done! A clean site is a safe site.
2. Send any unused material back to the shop as soon as possible. This keeps the site clean and orderly, and gives management the opportunity to ship the materials to another site where they can be used.
3. Don't overcrowd materials and workers. Give the crew room to work; they will work quicker and safer.
4. Although you have designated a person or team the responsibility for a clean and safe work site, make sure the rest of the crew understands that it is EVERYONE'S responsibility to maintain a clean work area.
5. Always keep an eye out for little things that may cause an accident; accidents are lost time.
6. Keep the tool boxes and cabinets neat and orderly. Digging around for a misplaced tool is lost time. And using the wrong tool because you could not find the right tool, in most cases, is unsafe and a BIG no-no.
7. Put trash in the garbage. This may seem simple, but that fast food bag after lunch may catch the wind, blowing garbage all over the site. Throw it away, before someone hurts themselves trying to grab it out of a trench or other dangerous area.

A good general rule is to put things where they belong -- by doing so you will be using time to its best, and you will make the job easier, smoother, quicker, and safer.

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