

## Fatal Facts

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### **INCIDENT #4 - Worker killed in trench collapse**

#### **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ACCIDENT**

An employee was installing a small diameter pipe in a trench 3 feet wide, 12-15 feet deep and 90 feet long. The trench was not shored or sloped nor was there a box or shield to protect the employee. Further, there was evidence of a previous cave-in. The employee apparently reentered the trench, and a second cave-in occurred, burying him. He was found face down in the bottom of the trench.

#### **ACCIDENT PREVENTION**

Employers must shore, slope, or otherwise support the sides of trenches to prevent their collapse (29 CFR 1926.652(a)(1)).

Employers must protect employees with adequate personal protective equipment (29 CFR 1926.95(a)).

Employers must provide an adequate means of exit from trenches (29 CFR 1926.651(c)(2)).

Employees must be instructed to recognize and avoid unsafe conditions associated with their work (29 CFR 1926.21(b)(2)).

#### **COMMENTARY**

If it appears unsafe it probably is unsafe. That being said, just because it looks safe doesn't mean that it is safe. The collapse of a trench or excavation can happen without warning in a matter of seconds before workers have a chance to react. Test the soil type and be aware of the potential hazards. Inspect the trench or excavation for water incursion. Underground water flow can rapidly erode soil and exacerbate collapse potential. Never allow a worker to enter an unprotected trench or excavation site.