

Georgia Tech's Safety and Health Consultation Program

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How to Prevent Trenching Accidents

Georgia Tech's Safety and Health Consultation Program is a free and confidential service funded by the U.S.Department of Labor and available to small businesses in the state of Georgia.

In trenches deeper than four feet, locate means of exit, such as ladders or steps, so they are no more than 25 feet of travel from anywhere in the trench. Vibrations from construction equipment, nearby construction operations, traffic, etc., create hazards. You may need to slope your For trenches more than five feet deep, slope trench less steeply, inspect your shoring more the sides no more than 1.5 to 1 unless you often, and lower the soil classification* from classify* the soil as Type A, B, or C. Other Type A to B or C, or Type B to C. alternatives are to use shoring or a trench box. Store all materials at least two feet from the edge of the trench. Keep heavy loads of all kinds as far from a trench Keep excavated materials at as possible. least two feet back from the edge of the trench. Don't allow water to accumulate in a Always check with utility companies or the "one-call trench. Water reduces soil stability, and its system" before digging. Locate all underground presence may cause you to lower the soil utilities near the trenching operation. Support any classification from Type A to B or C, or utilities adjacent to or crossing the trench. Overhead Type B to C. power lines are also a potential hazard.

*Soil classification must be performed by a competent person** using acceptable visual and manual tests such as those noted in Appendix A, paragraph (d).

**A competent person is one who is capable of identifying existing and predictable hazards in the surroundings, or working conditions that are unsanitary, hazardous, or dangerous, and who has the authority to take prompt corrective measures to eliminate them.

A competent person** must inspect the trench, adjacent areas, and any protective systems for possible cave-ins, failure of protective systems, hazardous atmospheres, or other hazardous conditions. Inspections must be performed daily: before work begins, throughout the shift, and after every rainstorm or other hazard-increasing occurrence.

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