

Cal Poly

Code of Safe Practice

Excavations / Trenches

These following general rules shall be followed and these precautions shall be taken when employees work in an excavation.

- All employees who participate in excavation work activities shall be informed and aware of the basic hazards. The competent person for the job should review these hazards during a pre-job tailgate meeting.
- Competent persons shall receive specific training.
- A competent person shall inspect the excavation and protective systems daily before the start of work and throughout the day as conditions change.
- The competent person shall have the authority to implement corrective action as necessary.
- The excavation operation shall be pre-planned to identify safe work practices, hazard recognition procedures, and soil determination/analysis tasks.
- Prior to beginning excavation work underground utilities shall be located and identified.
- Prior to beginning excavation work adjacent structures shall be stabilized.
- Protective systems shall be in place to protect employees from cave-ins.
- The area adjacent to the excavation shall be evaluated for previously backfilled excavations or the potential for vibration and possibly additional shoring or bracing may need to be provided.
- Excavation sites shall be tested for oxygen deficiency or the presence of other hazardous atmosphere prior to entry, if the potential for these hazards exists at the excavation site.
- Employees shall not enter or work in excavations with a hazardous atmosphere, unless a Confined Space Entry Permit has been completed for the task.
- Water accumulation shall be prevented whenever possible and adequate precautions shall be implemented to protect employees as applicable.
- Excavated material and all tools shall be retained 2 or more feet from the edge of the excavation so they do not fall into the excavation.
- Employees shall stay away from equipment loading or unloading material.
- Employees shall be protected from loads or objects falling from lifting or excavating equipment.

- Employees shall wear all required personal protective equipment as appropriate.
- Appropriate barricades, signs, and other protective devices shall be in place to protect the public.
- All equipment and materials shall be in good working condition.
- Stairs or ladders shall be provided when employees enter excavations over 4 feet deep.
- An exit shall be provided every 25 feet in the excavation.

Excavation/Trenching Trigger Numbers

- 2 FEET:** Required distance for spoils piles from edge of excavation/trench
- 3 FEET:** Length ladder must extend above excavation/trench
- 4 FEET:** Depth at which a ladder or ramp is required for access and egress
- 5 FEET:** Depth at which mandatory shoring, benching, and/or a protection system is required
- 6 FEET:** Depth at which fall protection is required for bridges/walkways across excavations/trenches
- 20 FEET:** Shoring designed by a registered engineer is required
- 25 FEET:** Maximum travel distance to an exit ladder

“IF IN DOUBT, GET OUT”