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”