

Construction Safety

By Mark Bevans, Source Water Specialist

The ultimate goal in accident prevention is “zero” disabling injuries and no lost work-time. However, there are many barriers to achieving this goal; the most important of which is the human attitude. Most people feel that “it won’t happen to me” or “it couldn’t happen here.” You can do more to protect yourself and your fellow worker by constantly thinking and practicing accident prevention than you can by memorizing all of the rules, regulations, and safeguards ever written or invented. You **must THINK** before you act.

When working on or near construction or renovation projects, always wear the proper personal protective equipment (i.e., hardhat, goggles, and gloves).

Prior to the start of construction or renovation, all areas should be inspected for the presence of underground utilities, overhead obstacles or any potentially hazardous situation. Locates **must** be performed before any digging can be started.

Supervisors should ensure employees receive training in the proper use of tools and protective equipment. If a respirator is required, only those employees who have had a physical examination and fit test shall be allowed in the area.

Excavations and trenches more than four feet deep shall have proper sloping or shoring. Employees should **never** enter a cave-in site in an attempt to rescue another worker without shoring in place.

General Excavation Safety Tips:

- Underground utilities must be located and marked.
- Trenches over four feet deep must have a safe exit such as a ramp or ladder within 25’ of every worker.
- Trenches 5 feet or deeper will be inspected daily.
- Excavated material and other objects must be kept at least 2 feet from the trench opening.
- No one works on the sides of sloped or benched excavations above other employees

unless the lower worker is protected from falling material.

- Station a Top Person outside the trench to detect moving ground and warn workers to leave the trench.
- Any excavating under the base or footing of a foundation or wall requires support system designed by a registered professional engineer.

Construction or renovation projects may require the placement of barricades, guardrails, or toeboards for employee protection. If barricades are left in place at night, adequate safety-flasher lighting is necessary.

At the end of the day, the most important thing is that **every** worker goes home to his or her family, having completed a safe and productive day! Remember to take your time and be safe in every situation because it only takes one bad decision or one **no** decision to change a family’s life forever!

Sincerely, Mark

Some information taken from www.pp.okstste.edu/ehs/manuals/PPSAFETY/intro.htm