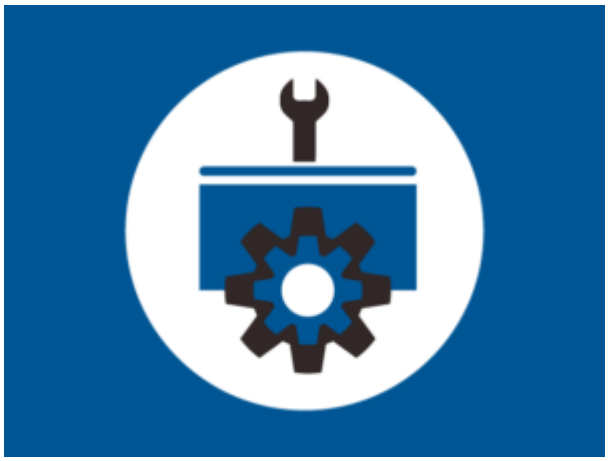
NIOSH Preventing Deaths from Trench Cave Ins



Handout on the recommended engineering controls protective equipment and safe work practices to minimize hazards and risk of worker deaths from trench cave ins.

Description of Exposure

Workers who dig or excavate trenches are at risk of death if they enter an unprotected trench and the walls collapse. However, hazards associated with trench work and excavation are well defined and preventable. The OSHA standard for excavation and trenching, known as 29 CFR* 1926 Subpart P, describes the precautions needed for safe excavation work.

There is no reliable warning when a trench fails. The walls can collapse suddenly, and workers will not have time to move out of the way. Even though small amounts of dirt may not seem *Code of Federal Regulations. See CFR in References treacherous, a single cubic yard of dirt can weigh more than 3,000 pounds, which can fatally crush or…