December 2025

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12-1-2025 - TBT – Excavation Requirements

Fast facts about excavations:

• All excavations 4’ or deeper require a means of access/egress every 25’.

• All excavations 5’ deep or greater require a protective system. (sloping, shoring, shielding)

• Spoil piles must be kept 2’ back from the edge of the excavation.

• Excavations 20’ or greater require a protective system to be designed by a professional engineer.

• Test for hazardous atmospheres in trenches that are greater than 4’ deep.

• A Competent Person must be present to inspect trenches daily and as conditions change to evaluate and eliminate excavation hazards.

• A Competent Person is an individual who can identify existing and predictable hazards or working conditions that are hazardous, soil types, and protective systems required.

• An excavation is any removal of soil. A trench is defined as a narrow excavation in relation to its’ length and generally with its depth greater than its width.

• Dirt is heavy. One cubic yard of soil can weigh as much as 3,000 pounds. (when wet)

• Excavations have many potential hazards. Cave-Ins, falls, falling loads, hazardous atmospheres, and hazards from mobile equipment are a few.

• Protective systems should take many things into consideration such as soil classification, depth of cut, water content in soil, weather, other operations, and underground facilities, to name a few.

• No matter how many trenching, shoring, and backfilling projects you or your crew has performed, each is unique.

• Never dig without a current utility locate. If you are unsure a locate has been performed for your project, call your supervisor.

• Soil types can be classified as A, B, or C and dictate how we protect workers in those excavations.

• All soil types shall be treated as class C (least stable) unless field testing performed by a Competent Person determines otherwise.

These facts serve to provide continuous training and awareness during excavation operations performed by SCS. Please refer to the SCS Safety Program, Excavation and Trenching section, Safety Portal, for further information and guidance.

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12-08-2025 - TBT - Avoiding Strains, Blows, and Pinches When Handling Portable Ladders

12-08-2025 Toolbox Talk: Avoiding Strains, Blows, and Pinches When Handling Portable Ladders [Reference 1910 Subpart D / 1926 Subpart X]

Stories about workers who suffer life-altering injuries while using a portable ladder always grab our attention. But there are many other ladder users who will also suffer injuries that, while relatively less severe, can still result in a lot of pain, misery, as well as lost time at work and unwanted medical expenses. So here are a few things to keep in the front of our minds while working with portable ladders to help us avoid nagging injuries to ourselves and others.

• Avoid Back Injuries. Ask someone to help any time you are setting up, taking down, or transporting a heavy ladder. This is especially true if your ladder is a long one, as the ladder's weight combined with its long length multiplies by several times the amount of torque applied to your back when handling the ladder alone.

• Work Smarter – Not Harder. When setting up a long extension ladder to lean against a wall or similar structure, lay the ladder flat on the ground with the feet against the base of the wall. Then lift the other end and "walk" the ladder up until it is flat against the wall in an upright position. Then reach down to a lower rung with one hand while holding the ladder steady on a higher rung with your other hand and slowly pull the bottom of the ladder away from the wall until it is leaning against the wall at the proper angle.

• Avoid Those Pinch Points. Avoid placing your hands and fingers near any pinch point when opening or folding closed your portable step ladder. This is especially a hazard at the points where the spreaders on step ladders are attached and hinged near the top part of the ladder, as they act like a scissor closing as the ladder is folded shut.

• Smashed Fingers Hurt Too! Avoid placing your fingers in between the front and back sections of a step ladder when folding the ladder closed, or when carrying it from one place to another. Many ladder users suffer smashed fingers when the two sections come together – often with surprising speed and force!

• Exercise Extra Caution at Blind Corners and Doorways – When carrying your portable ladder around the work site, slow down when approaching corners, doorways, and similar areas so you do

not run into someone walking or standing on the other side. You might even want to shout out a verbal warning as you approach such areas. Also, lower the leading end of the ladder slightly so in the event you do accidentally contact someone coming around a corner, at least the ladder won’t strike their face or head.

These are not the only potential hazards than cause us to suffer injuries. But they are some of the most common ones that we can try and avoid. So, use extra caution while handling portable ladders; slow down and think about these tips when setting up, taking down, and transporting your portable ladder. The injury you avoid may be your own.

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12-15-2025 - TBT – Winter Driving Safety

The leading cause of death during winter storms is transportation accidents. Many accidents could be avoided if drivers took time to learn and practice these tips for driving safely during snowy and icy conditions.

Perhaps the deadliest danger of all is "black ice." Black ice is ice which forms on a roadway, usually due to snow melting and re-freezing. Since it is almost invisible, drivers fail to recognize black ice conditions and may drive at normal speeds-often resulting in very serious accidents. Always be alert to the possibility of black ice when temperatures are near or below freezing. Pavement that looks dry but appears darker in color and dull looking should alert you to the presence of black ice.

Failing to allow yourself enough time to stop is a major cause of winter driving accidents. During slippery conditions stopping distances can triple. Driving at a slower speed, anticipating stops at traffic lights and intersections, and applying brakes sooner than normal will help ensure accident-free stops. When braking, brake carefully with short, rapid application of the brakes. Always allow plenty of extra space between you and other vehicles to minimize the need for quick stops.

Acceleration, turning, and passing also present dangers during winter. Accelerate slowly to avoid loss of traction and subsequent loss of control. Turn slowly, with caution, to avoid sliding into a stationary object or the path of an oncoming vehicle. Avoid sudden movements. Pass with care because passing lanes are not maintained as well as driving lanes. Again, leave extra space between yourself and other vehicles so there's room to maneuver in case something goes wrong. During a skid, steer cautiously in the direction you want the car to go.

Driving in the snow and ice is one of the most dangerous activities you can do while out on the road. Traction is at a premium and you can easily lose control of your vehicle.

Here are some tips you should remember for driving safely in winter:

- Always use your seatbelt.
- Turn on your headlights during adverse weather conditions. Overcast skies and falling snow limit visibility. It is important to see and be seen.
- Like all the signs say, bridges and overpasses freeze before the roadway. Use extra caution on these.
- Remember that driving in winter weather conditions causes physical and mental fatigue and reduces reaction times. Get plenty of rest and adequate nutrition. Don't drive while you're sleepy or on medication that causes drowsiness.
- Prepare your vehicle well ahead of time. Check fluid levels, tire pressure, lights, and the battery. Have a mechanic give your vehicle a winter check-up and make any necessary repairs.

- Stock an emergency kit containing heavy clothes and a blanket, traction material such as sand or kitty litter, tire chains, a small shovel, first aid kit, flashlight, jumper cables, and a bright cloth to use as a flag.

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12-22-2025 – TBT - Slip, Trip, and Falls

Slips, trips, and falls are one of the leading causes of injuries and fatalities in the workplace. According to OSHA, slip, trip, and fall incidents cause 15% of all accidental deaths and are second only to motor vehicle incidents as a cause of fatalities on the job. These types of incidents can result in life-changing injuries to the employees who suffer them.

Common Slip, Trip, and Fall Incidents:

- Falls from elevation are often deadly or result in serious injury and may include falls from ladders, falls off mobile equipment, falls from roofs or other elevated structures, etc.
- Slip incidents on slippery surfaces such as snow and ice are common in colder geographical areas in the U.S. Wet floor conditions or spilled liquids are also common causes of slip incidents at work.
- Trips can be caused by a multitude of reasons, including poor housekeeping, changes in elevation, poor lighting conditions, improper footwear, etc.

Mitigation Actions to Prevent Slip, Trip, and Fall Incidents:

- Always use fall prevention or protection for work over 4ft in general industry work and 6ft in the construction industry. Protect workers by using proper guarding of any holes or open windows and use guardrails to prevent falls. Where guardrails are not feasible, use adequate fall protection. An example of adequate fall protection is a full-body harness and a self-retracting lanyard attached to an approved anchor point with 100% tie-off.
- Proper housekeeping is very important in preventing slip, trip, and falls incidents. Objects on the ground create a hazard for anyone walking or working in the area. Maintain clearly defined paths for walking in the work area. Maintain organized areas for tools and equipment out of the way of employee foot traffic.
- Address any wet, slippery, or icy walking surfaces in your work area. Post signs of any hazardous surfaces until the situation is taken care of completely.
- When climbing up or down a portable or fixed ladder, ensure that you use proper techniques, such as using three points of contact and keeping your belt buckle within the sides of the ladder. Do not lean to reach objects- this can throw off your balance, and you could fall.

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