

# 02/16/2026 - TBT - Competent Person in Excavation and Trenching

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OSHA requires that a “Competent Person” be responsible for the safety of all workers in a trenching/excavation operation. OSHA defines a Competent Person as “an individual who is capable of identifying existing and predictable hazards or working conditions that are hazardous, unsanitary, or dangerous to employees and who is authorized to take prompt corrective measures to eliminate or control these hazards and conditions.” The Competent Person is required to:

Have training in soil analysis and the use of protective systems, be knowledgeable about OSHA requirements, and have authority to immediately eliminate hazards.

Inspect the trench, adjacent areas, and any protective systems for possible cave-ins, failure of protective systems, hazardous atmospheres, or other hazardous conditions. Inspections must be performed daily: before work begins, throughout the shift, and after every rainstorm or other hazard increasing occurrence.

Review a pre-task plan with supervisor daily.

Assure that the location of underground installations or utilities have been properly located.

Identify and ensure use of adequate protective systems, work methods, and personal protective equipment (PPE) on the excavation site.

Test for low oxygen, hazardous fumes and toxic gases, especially when gasoline engine-driven equipment is running, or the dirt has been contaminated by leaking lines or storage tanks. Insure adequate ventilation or respiratory protection, if necessary.

Provide safe access within 25 feet of workers into and out of the excavation.

Provide appropriate protections if water accumulation is a problem.

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